N 8/28

STREET & SMITH'S

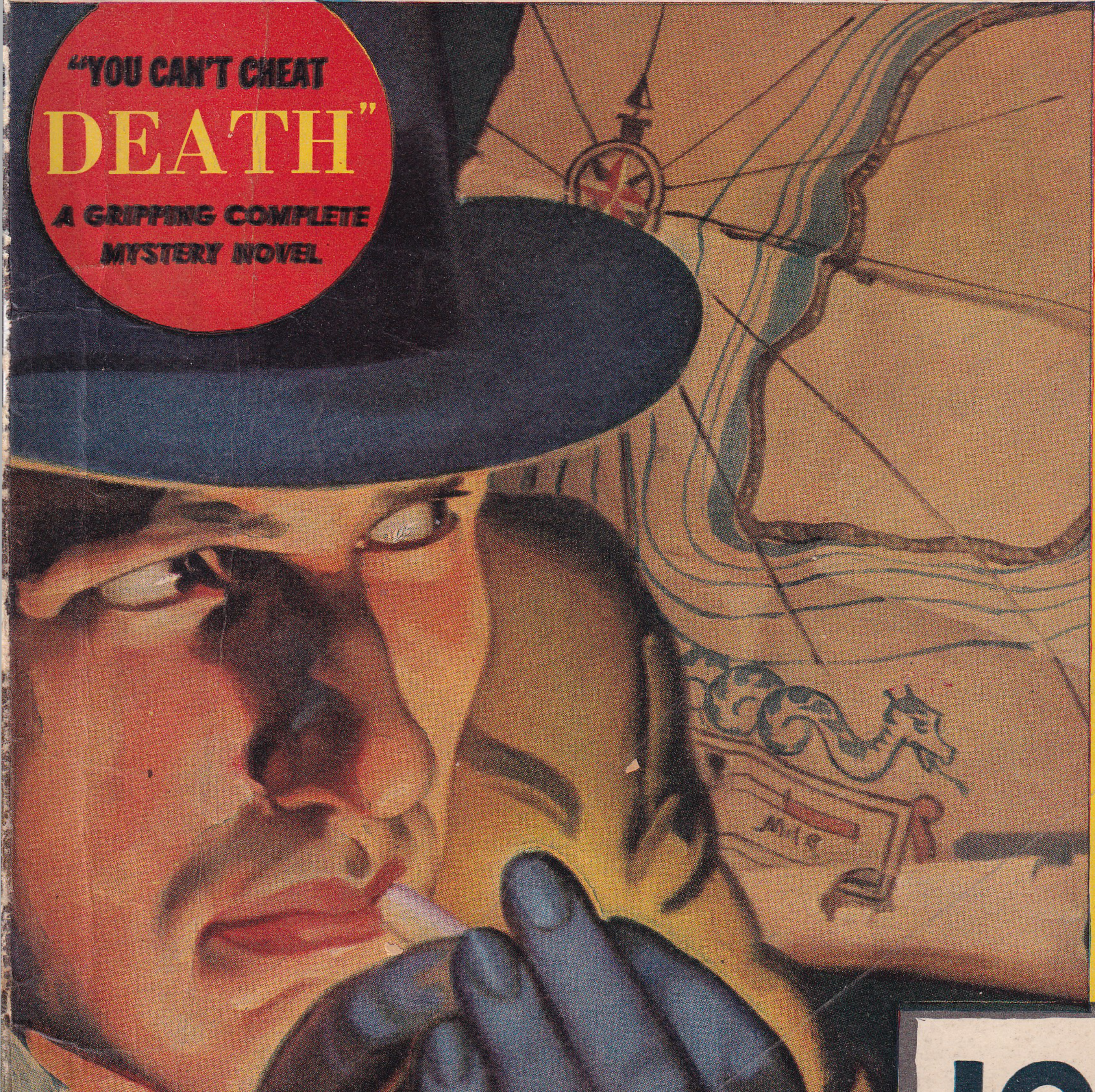
MYSTERY

NOV. '40

4/C

MAGAZINE

UNUSUAL DETECTIVE STORIES



"YOU CAN'T CHEAT DEATH"

A GRIPPING COMPLETE MYSTERY NOVEL

10¢

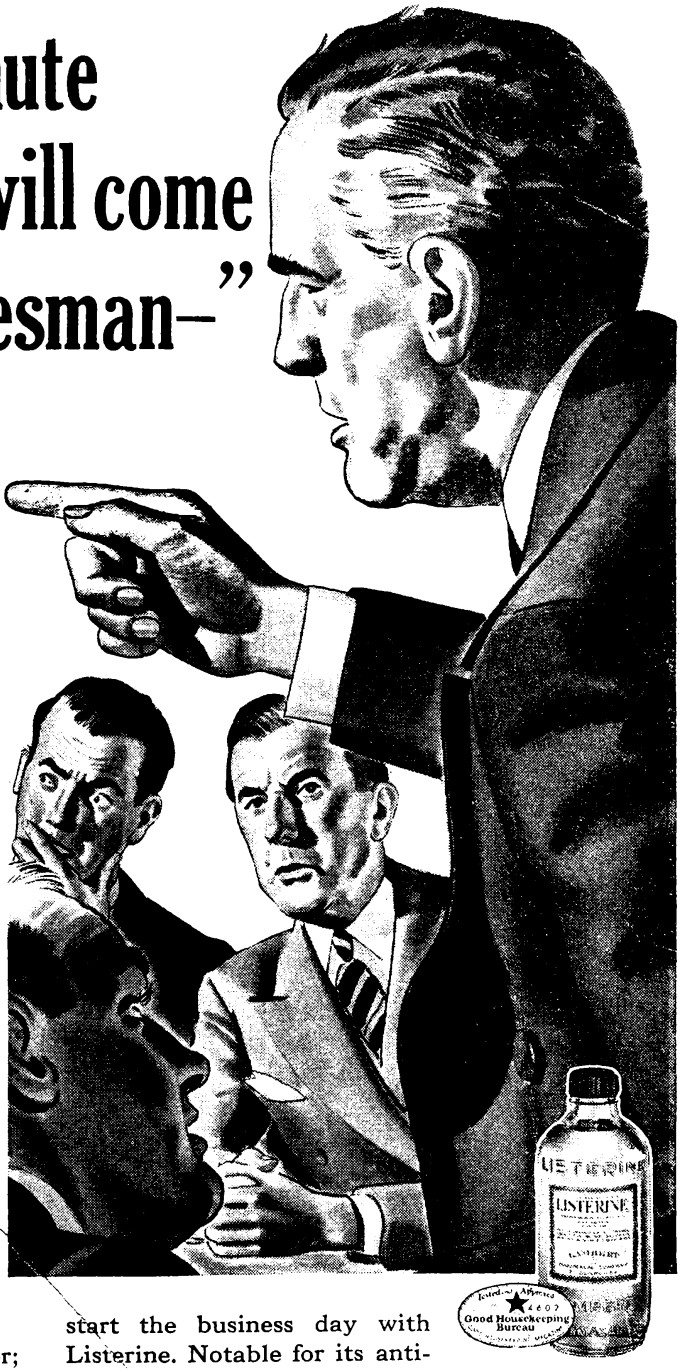
NOV·1940

"WIRED FOR DEATH" BY W. T. BALLARD

"TANK TOWN TOUR" A NORGIL NOVELETTE by MAXWELL GRANT

AND OTHERS · ALL STORIES COMPLETE

"Boys, in 1 minute through that door will come our new star salesman–"



JUST when we had got to thinking our sales were doing extra all right, J. P., the sales manager, whammed home the old body punch at the first-of-the-month meeting.

"Boys," he said, "in just one minute, through that door will come our new star salesman . . . and I expect every man to cooperate with him to the fullest."

No kiddin', a pin dropping would have sounded like an exploding bombshell. Jim Smith looked at me, I stared at Ed Johnson. What was going on? Who was this newcomer? What kind of a bird would he be? Who was going to be "fired"? J. P. sure had us in a dither —and I mean dither!

And then, through the door staggered the office boy carrying a tray as big as a cart wheel. On top of it stood twelve big, gleaming bottles of Listerine Antiseptic.

J. P. grabbed the nearest one off the tray and slammed it down on the desk.

"Here he is," he bellowed, "and none of you guys had better laugh, either. For a long time I've noticed that some of you men—and I'm not mentioning any names, all too frequently have a breath that would knock a cow down. It all adds up to this: *If I've noticed it, customers must have noticed it, too.* And that's bound to be bad for business. After coming up against a case of halitosis a couple of times, a customer is entitled to close the door on you—*for keeps.*"

We all stirred uneasily.

"From now on," J. P. continued, "this is an order; take a swig of Listerine Antiseptic every morning before you hit the street. Get that? Not now and then after a big night . . . but *every* morning. Step up, gentlemen, and get your bottle."

Maybe J. P. was right, and maybe it's only coincidence, but I'm doggoned if the sales for the next six months weren't better, in spite of a lot of tricky stuff from our competitors.

How's *Your* Breath?

In business, it's just common sense to take precautions that your breath doesn't offend. Odor seldom gets an order . . . often loses one.

More and more smart salesmen recognize this and start the business day with Listerine. Notable for its antiseptic and deodorant power, Listerine renders the breath sweeter, fresher, purer.

Why not get in the habit of using Listerine Antiseptic yourself? It makes your mouth feel so wonderfully fresh and clean. The moment Listerine enters the oral cavity, it begins to halt the fermentation of tiny food particles which, some authorities say, is the principal cause of bad breath, then overcomes the odors that fermentation causes.

Keep Listerine Antiseptic handy at home and in the office, and tuck a bottle in your bag when you travel. Rinse the mouth with it before every business and social engagement. It really pays! Lambert Pharmacal Co., *St. Louis, Mo.*

LISTERINE CHECKS HALITOSIS *(Bad Breath)*

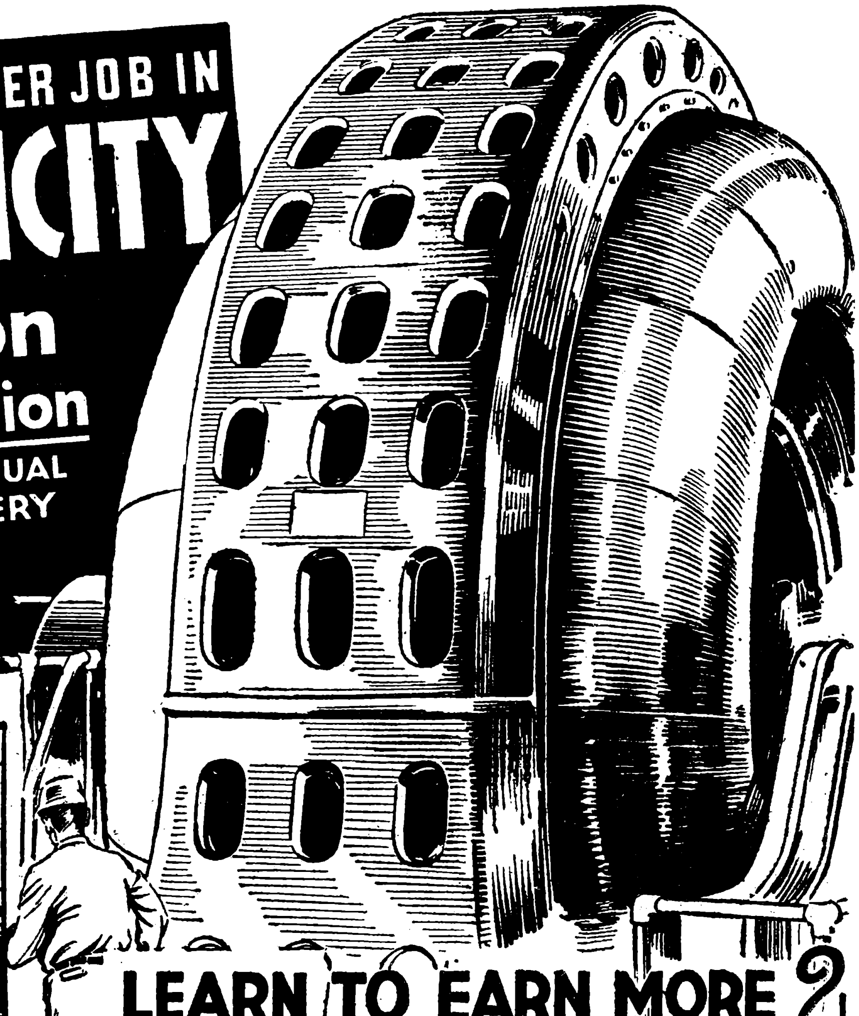
TRAIN FOR A BETTER JOB IN

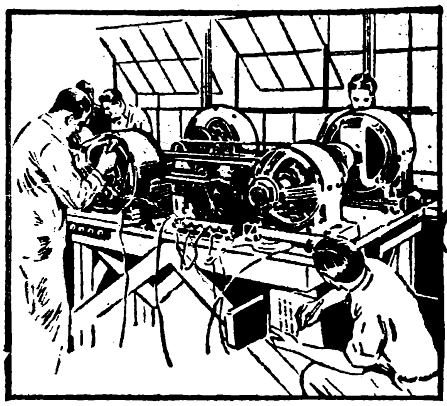
ELECTRICITY

Pay Tuition After Graduation

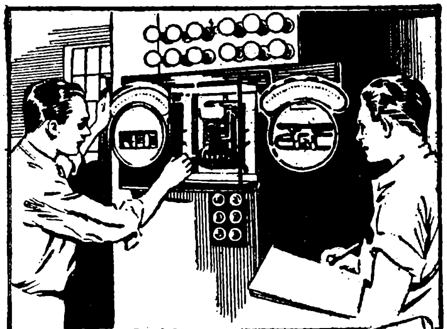
ACTUAL WORK ON ACTUAL ELECTRICAL MACHINERY

12 WEEKS SHOP TRAINING





First you are told and shown what to do and how to do it. Then you do it yourself.



GET MY BIG FREE BOOK

COYNE
CHICAGO

Home of Coyne Electrical School

LEARN TO EARN MORE?

My big free book tells you how we train you in 12 weeks for your start to a better job and better future.

Learn by Doing

You get your training not by book or lessons but on actual electrical machinery and equipment.

Get Training First—Pay Tuition Later

You can get your training first and then pay for it in 12 monthly payments starting 5 months after you start school or 60 days after your 12 weeks training period is over. Mail coupon for all the details of this plan.

Earn While Learning

Lack of money need not stop you. You can get training first and pay after graduation and if you are short of money for living expenses we will help you get a part time job while training.

Previous Experience or Advanced Education Not Necessary

You don't need any previous electrical experience or advanced education to get my training.

Graduate Employment Service

After graduation every graduate is given employment help, consultation help and many other services to help him make a success of his training.

4-Weeks Extra Radio Course Included

Right now I am including an extra 4 weeks course in Radio. This training is given you at no extra tuition cost.

Get My Complete Story

Fill in and clip the coupon below. Then mail it to me. When I receive it I'll send you my big free book and all the details of the features I have outlined here.

This will not obligate you in any way and no salesman will call on you as I do not employ salesmen.

You owe it to yourself and your future to get these facts now.

So don't put it off—mail the coupon now.

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL 500 S. PAULINA ST. Dept. CO-45, CHICAGO

MAIL THE COUPON NOW

H. C. LEWIS, President, COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL,
500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. CO-45, Chicago, Ill.

I'm really in earnest. I do want to get ahead. Send me your big free catalog with full particulars about Coyne training and your plans to help a fellow, who hasn't a lot of money, to get ahead.

Name..

Address..

City.................................... State.......................

STREET & SMITH'S

MYSTERY

MAGAZINE

UNUSUAL DETECTIVE STORIES

CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER, 1940 VOL. VI NO. 5

The editorial contents of this magazine have not been published before, are protected by copyright and cannot be reprinted without the publisher's permission.

COMPLETE NOVEL

YOU CAN'T CHEAT DEATH . . . . Theodore Tinsley . . 9
Murder rides on a phantom horse!

NOVELETTES

MILLION-DOLLAR MURDER . . . Ned O'Doherty . . . 41
Cy English sees through—and shoots through—a killer!

TANK-TOWN TOUR . . . . Maxwell Grant . . . 54
Death costars with Norgil, the magician!

WIRED FOR DEATH . . . . W. T. Ballard . . . 71
Red Drake, racetrack dick, outslicks a slicker!

SHORT STORIES

BLOOD ON HIS HANDS . . . . Milton Lowe 87
A deadly poison makes an invalid recover!

SUCH THINGS CAN'T BE . . . . . Jack Storm 103
A talking corpse tells on a murderer!

DEPARTMENT

BEHIND THE CURTAIN 5
Backgrounds of our stories and a look ahead.

COVER BY GRAVES GLADNEY

All stories in this magazine are fiction. No actual persons are designated either by name or character. Any similarity is coincidental.

NEXT ISSUE
ON SALE
OCTOBER 30th
10c per COPY
50c A YEAR

Bimonthly publication issued by Street & Smith Publications, Incorporated, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Allen L. Grammer, President; Ormond V. Gould, Vice President; Henry W. Ralston, Vice President; Gerald H. Smith, Treasurer and Secretary. Copyright, 1940, in U. S. A. and Great Britain by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. Reentered as Second-class Matter, June 18, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions to Canada and Countries in Pan American Union, 60c per year; elsewhere, $1.00 per year. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any material submitted must include return postage.

Printed in the U. S. A.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC. • 79 7th AVE., NEW YORK

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

There are a great many things which this world has come to accept as practical impossibilities. You hear that "crime does not pay," that nothing is certain but "death and taxes," and so on. And you also hear that "You Can't Cheat Death," which is the title of the complete novel, starting on Page 9 of this issue.

There is a story behind that title, and behind the story. Part of the story came over a dinner table; another part of it came in a doctor's office. Then Theodore Tinsley took these points and welded them into one of the best mystery novels we've seen in a long time.

The idea came originally over a dinner table where a young doctor, who had just opened his office in a small town, was talking over some of his experiences with another friend—a hospital laboratory technician. We were the third at the table, and although there are plenty of doctors in our acquaintance, we continue to be very unprofessional about things in medicine. So we simply listened while these two talked about narrow escapes in operating rooms; how, very often, the success or failure of an operation depends upon some very little thing that no one seems to even notice. It's not a matter of negligence on the part of doctor or nurse, either; it's something that seems almost supernatural. And despite such little slips, some people pull through operations, and others do not despite all the skill and care expended on them.

So the verdict was that, somehow, things balance themselves. Doctors lose so many patients, and gain so many—you can't cheat death.

It wasn't until the next day that the real story behind this struck us, so off we went to that doctor's office to ask more questions, get more stories about different experiences. And then Tinsley came into the discussion, and so we had the start for a good yarn.

That's about all we dare tell you about this, or we'll be getting into the story ourselves. You'll find it really good, and plenty of pulse-stirring moments are in its pages. Although it is, naturally, fiction, it sounds so real that you'll be afraid to go through a dark alley for a week after reading it!

Mark Harper, who has given us many good stories, comes through with another that is even better than average. So much better, in fact, that we could not see any way of condensing it into a novelette, and asked that he work the idea up to a complete novel. He turned it in, and we've got it scheduled for the next issue. It's "The Terror in Martin's Glade," and it sure is some story!

It isn't just another mystery novel. It has a feeling and a tone about it which make you want to settle down deep in your chair and be left alone until you've read every last line of it. Everything in it is unusual, and you'll find it a welcome change from the type of mystery which seems to insist that a lot of horror, a lot of killing, a lot of general bang-bang stuff must accompany a story to make it interesting.

"Tank-Town Tour," the Norgil story on Page 54, is another tale from the fine pen of Maxwell Grant, author of the famous Shadow novels. These magician stories in our magazine have, whether we wish it or not, made our book sort of headquarters for amateur magicians. Every time Maxwell Grant comes to the office on business for these stories, or for *The Shadow,* every amateur, as well as professional, magician in town seems to be asking for him. What is even worse, everyone in the office becomes a magic fan for the duration of Grant's stay here, so you see decks of cards, disappearing coins, fancy handkerchiefs, and things like that all over the place. And the restaurant around the corner might as well be a theater stage, the way these fellows make things disappear. As for ourselves, at such time we are content to make the food disappear. In this, we make as good a showing as the best of the magicians.

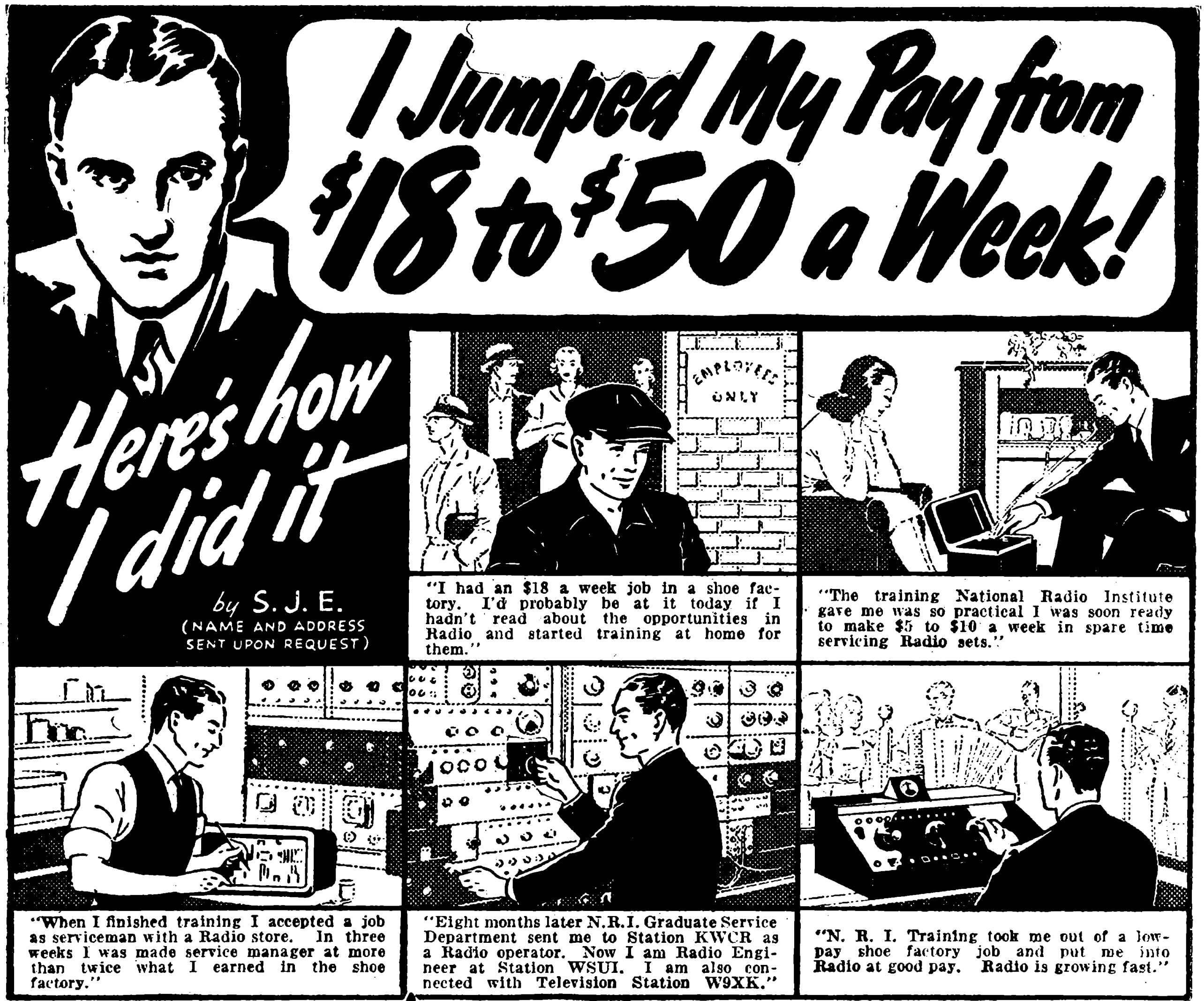
At any rate, all these get-togethers are interesting, and produce many good ideas for more Norgil yarns, for all of the magicians are free with suggestions, out of which Grant selects the best for future stories.

Another Jim Strong yarn, "Death Is Vain," is coming up in the next issue. The author, Frank Gruber, continues to rate tops in mystery work, with his second book now a best seller. The first book, "The French Key," was a winner in the Mary Roberts Rinehart mystery contest, and has sold three editions, to top the list of mystery sellers for the year. His second book, "The Laughing Fox," featuring the same detective character as the first, leads the early fall list of mysteries, and the reviews mark it as certain to repeat the success of his first book, thus giving Gruber somewhat of a record in having two outstanding best-sellers in a year.

Gruber's work appears in another magazine of ours, *Clues-Detective Stories,* with regularity. Most of our readers will be eager to get everything they can that is written by him.

There will be a new Carrie Cashin story in our next issue. Carrie is

Continued on page 113



I Jumped My Pay from $18 to $50 a Week!

Here's how I did it

by S. J. E.
(NAME AND ADDRESS SENT UPON REQUEST)

"I had an $18 a week job in a shoe factory. I'd probably be at it today if I hadn't read about the opportunities in Radio and started training at home for them."

"The training National Radio Institute gave me was so practical I was soon ready to make $5 to $10 a week in spare time servicing Radio sets."

"When I finished training I accepted a job as serviceman with a Radio store. In three weeks I was made service manager at more than twice what I earned in the shoe factory."

"Eight months later N.R.I. Graduate Service Department sent me to Station KWCR as a Radio operator. Now I am Radio Engineer at Station WSUI. I am also connected with Television Station W9XK."

"N. R. I. Training took me out of a low-pay shoe factory job and put me into Radio at good pay. Radio is growing fast."

EMPLOYEES ONLY

Find out today how I Train You at Home to BE A RADIO TECHNICIAN

J. E. SMITH,
President
National Radio Institute
Est. 25 Years

If you can't see a future in your present job, feel you'll never make much more money, if you're in a seasonal field, subject to lay offs, IT'S TIME NOW to investigate Radio. Trained Radio Technicians make good money, and you don't have to give up your present job or leave home to learn Radio. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio; Loudspeaker Systems, Electronic Devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N.R.I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open many good jobs soon.

Many Make $5 to $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $5 to $10 a week extra in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television; shows more than 100 letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. OHD
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

MAIL NOW • Get 64 page book FREE

RICH REWARDS IN RADIO

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. OHD,
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

Age.........

Name ....

Address ....

City.................................... State..........

BE YOUR OWN EXPERT!

● Find the answers to your Saturday's football problem as nearly as football can be doped. Facts presented on all leading football teams in every section of the country by the leading football expert in that section. The inside dope gathered and analyzed by the best-informed experts in every section.

If you can read, you can figure out the winners . . . as nearly as football can be doped.

THE EXPERTS who'll help you pick 'em:

Charles Moran, Editor, Football Year Book
Noted football authority

Stanley Woodward, Sports Editor, N. Y. Herald Tribune

Arthur Sampson, Football Expert, Boston Herald

James S. Kearns, Football Editor, Chicago Daily News

Paul Zimmerman, Sports Editor, Los Angeles Times

Les Goates, Sports Editor, Salt Lake City Desert News

Jack Troy, Sports Editor, Atlanta Constitution

Lorin McMullen, Sports Editor, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

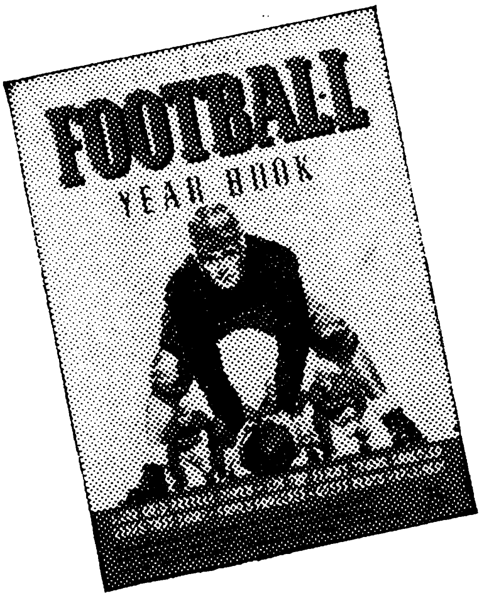
Clyde McBride, Sports Editor, Kansas City Star

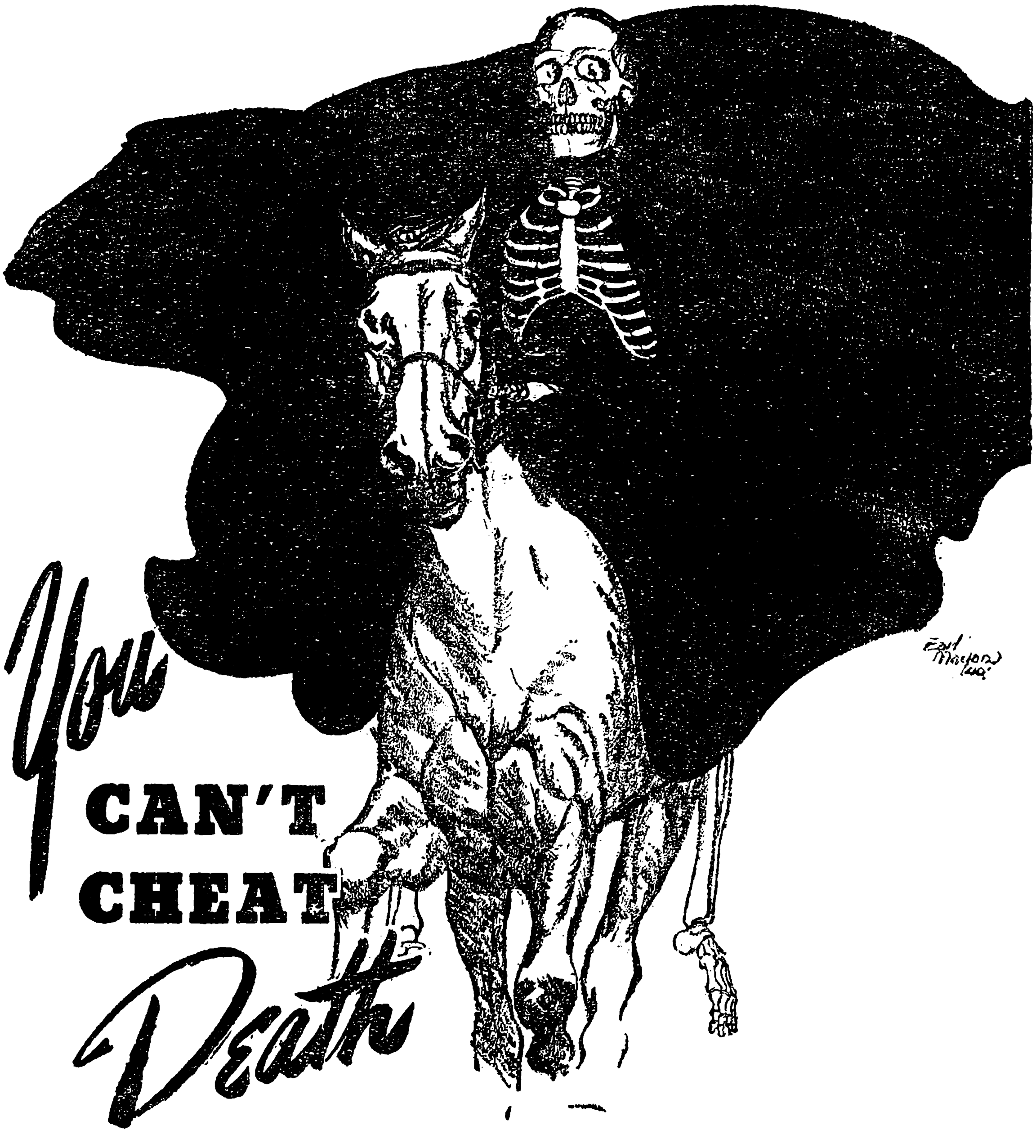
The most informed work on gridiron strength available during this football season.

STREET & SMITH'S

FOOTBALL YEAR BOOK

ON SALE AUGUST 30th 25c PER COPY





You CAN'T CHEAT Death

A Complete Novel

by THEODORE TINSLEY

Death rides a phantom horse and leaves no tracks!

CHAPTER I.

TWO AGAINST DEATH.

Brilliant white light blazed downward from the domed ceiling of the hospital operating room. It centered on a table where the sheeted figure of a young girl lay. The girl had suffered a severe head injury. A delicate brain operation was in progress.

Several physicians from the hospital staff stood nearby on a raised platform from which they could view the exposed skull of the patient. They watched with absorbed interest the skillful hands of the surgeon. His gloved fingers moved as if they had separate intelligence of their own. Not a motion was wasted. The surgeon never once glanced toward his nurse. She anticipated his every need.

It was magnificent teamwork—two against death!

Death was a familiar foe to this doctor and this nurse. Dr. Winslow was one of the most brilliant brain surgeons in America. He never performed an operation without Miss Burke at his side.

Tonight his nurse watched Winslow with more care than usual. She sensed a strange tension in him. His eyes seemed to bulge above the white gauze of his surgical mask. Once when his hand touched hers for a quick exchange of instruments, he fumbled. Under the rubber glove his hand felt like ice.

Strange that his hand should be so cold! The summer heat in the operating room was oppressive. Miss Burke could feel a wet trickle of perspiration down her spine. In the sticky darkness outside the hospital, a summer storm was brewing. Rain was sorely needed. Six days and nights of intolerable humidity made the prospect of a cool downpour something to be welcomed.

Thunder rumbled faintly. Dr. Winslow waited stiffly until the sound ceased. There was fright in his eyes.

The delicate climax of the operation had come. Winslow's hands moved faster over the exposed skull of the unconscious girl on the table. It was almost as if he were cringingly eager to finish his work before the faraway thunder rumbled again. Miss Burke felt herself praying for silence. She didn't realize how tightly her palms were clenched until she had to pry them open to take the final glittering instrument from Dr. Winslow.

The sigh from behind his white-gauze mask was like a shuddering gasp. He straightened and did an unheard-of thing for him. He spoke.

"I've won!" he cried thickly. "This girl *will live!*"

It was the first time in the memory of Miss Burke that Dr. Winslow had ever uttered a word in the sacred silence of an operating amphitheater. He spoke harshly—as if he were triumphing over death.

Then, before any of the startled physicians could recover from their astonishment at this breach of surgical etiquette, Dr. Winslow made a brusque gesture. The gesture was a signal to an assistant surgeon. The latter moved forward with another nurse. They began the routine work of preparing the patient for the return trip to her room.

Winslow walked to the corridor with Miss Burke. He stumbled as she closed the door. He caught at his nurse's arm and she could feel the ice-cold pressure of his fingers. She lifted the surgical mask from her lips.

"Doctor, what's the matter?"

"Nothing."

His hands were steady. But he was fighting for self-control, nevertheless. His eyes showed that.

"Go and scrub up, nurse! There's nothing wrong—except this damnable summer heat. It's—it's stifling!"

The rumble of thunder made the corridor quiver faintly. Dr. Winslow uttered a jerky laugh.

"Almost like a gallop of hoofs, isn't it?"

"Are you going to talk to Dan Colter?"

"Who?" He seemed dazed.

"Marion Colter's brother," the nurse said quietly.

Winslow didn't reply. Miss Burke spoke slowly, like a mother explaining something to a child.

"Marion Colter, doctor! The girl you just operated on. Her brother Dan is waiting in the reception room. I promised him that the moment we knew—"

"Yes, yes. Of course! The poor devil is probably half crazy with worry. Tell him it's all right. His sister will live! I'll see him myself as soon as I scrub up."

He stepped into a tiny white-tiled room, slamming the door nervously. A quick jerk ripped off his surgical mask and sent it flying into an antiseptic container. His stained smock and the rubber gloves followed suit.

Dr. Winslow stared into the basin mirror as he began the complicated hospital ritual of cleansing his hands.

His face was surprisingly young. He had risen fast in his profession. His smile made him look even younger. But it was a tremulous smile. The face in the mirror was pale.

"Don't be an ass!" Winslow growled at his reflection. "The trouble with you is that you've got too much imagination. Don't let it scare you!"

He changed to his regular clothes. His suit wasn't much to look at. A cheap one, in fact. And for a simple reason. Dr. Winslow couldn't afford to buy a better one.

Half the time he never charged anything for his services. Charity work! True, his fees from millionaire patients brought in many thousands of dollars. But of these sums Dr. Winslow retained only enough for his bare personal needs. The rest went into research work, into laboratory equipment, into the things that had made this small suburban hospital one of the most famous institutions in the country.

Dr. Winslow never liked to hear people talk about his philanthropy. He lived in a small cottage on the grounds of the Ferndale Hospital. There wasn't a man, woman or child in Ferndale who didn't admire him.

Having changed his clothes, Dr. Winslow descended to the reception room. A young man was pacing up and down inside. The moment he saw the surgeon he sprang forward, his face twisted with anxiety.

"My sister . . . is she—"

"Quite safe! She endured a long and extremely difficult operation like a soldier. Your sister will live, Mr. Colter!"

"Thank God!"

Colter's voice broke. Winslow helped him to a chair and sat down alongside him. Colter began to babble in a low voice.

"Doctor, as you know, I haven't much money. I'm just a bank clerk on a small salary. But I've saved a little—and every penny that I own in this world is yours!"

Winslow chuckled sympathetically.

"Forget it, my boy. I ought to pay your sister for the privilege of being allowed to perform that operation. It was a particularly interesting bit of brain technique."

He changed the subject in an effort to ease Colter's tension.

"She's a fine girl. A good horsewoman, too, I understand. I can't figure how she managed to let herself be thrown so badly from a gentle old riding-academy horse."

"Nor I," Colter muttered.

The grief suddenly faded from his eyes. A hard and bitter look replaced it.

"I don't think that fall of Marion's on the bridle path was any accident, doctor. I think she was meant to be thrown!"

"You mean—" Winslow stared at Colter, his face shocked.

"I mean—Sid Jameson! The owner of the riding academy. The man who was with Marion when the accident occurred. Jameson meant my sister to die, doctor! That damned, good-looking whelp in his tweed coat and whipcord breeches did something to Marion's saddle to cause her to be thrown!"

"That's a serious charge to make. I'd be careful, if I were you, Colter. Have you any proof?"

"None. Except Sid Jameson's reputation where young girls are concerned. You know the sort he is, doctor! Marion fell in love with him. Then he got tired of her. Wait—let me finish! Jameson was the only one with Marion when she was hurt. He stayed with her only until help came, then he galloped off to catch Marion's lost horse. Why? I suspect it was to remove the evidence of an attempt at murder!"

"You misjudge Jameson," Dr. Winslow said gently. "As you know, I more or less grew up with him. He was my uncle's stable boy. Good-looking and a flashy dresser, I'll admit. But not a killer. My uncle thought enough of Jameson to leave him a sizable bequest when he died. And my uncle was a good judge of human nature."

"Of you, perhaps. But not Jameson. The proof of that is the different way each of you behaved after you inherited the money."

"Please!"

"You spent only enough to get you additional surgical skill and start you in practice. You never touched another penny. You set up the whole bulk of your inheritance as a trust fund for medical research, and you put it in charge of Judge Rankin. In short, your whole impulse was unselfish and—"

"Be quiet!" Winslow murmured, his face flushed.

"And what did this sleek Sid Jameson do? He played the races and made more money—until there was a scandal and he was barred from the racetrack. Then he bought this riding academy and changed his interest from horses to women."

"Gossip," Dr. Winslow said, but his face was troubled.

A rumble of thunder came from the open window. Winslow stiffened at the noise, then relaxed.

"Excuse me. I'm on edge. Does that thunder sound queer to you?"

"Queer?" Colter stared at him, puzzled.

"Like the rumble of a horse's hoofs. A galloping horse. I've had a strange feeling all evening. A sense of dread. A feeling of something galloping closer and closer."

Dan Colter shook his head.

"You're exhausted, doctor. You need sleep. I'm sorry I bothered you with my— *What's that!*"

Winslow heard, it too. He crouched against the wall, his face white to the lips.

It was the galloping beat of a horse's hoofs!

The sound came from the corridor. It seemed to reverberate in the air, midway between the floor and the ceiling. A ghost horse—galloping through thin air—down the length of a hospital corridor, then out through solid walls into the black sticky night.

Winslow seemed frozen, unable to move. Dan Colter sprang to the door and wrenched it open. He stared out. The corridor was quiet and very peaceful. At the far end a nurse sat at a desk writing in her report book. She had obviously heard nothing.

"What in Heaven's name was it?" Colter whispered.

"Death!" Dr. Winslow breathed. His smile was ghastly. "Thank God, you heard it too, or I'd think I was going mad! I heard those hoofbeats all during the operation I performed on your sister. They kept coming closer, closer— But now—they're gone!"

His voice shook.

"It's a crazy thing to say, but I think that tonight you and I heard *Death* put to rout. It galloped very close to your sister—but I cheated it! Remember your Bible, Colter? *'A pale rider on a pale horse—'* Conquered and put to flight, thank God! Now I'm no longer afraid!"

"I am," Colter muttered. "I don't like to hear you boast about—cheating Death."

He stopped talking abruptly. The door of the reception room opened. Miss Burke appeared. There was anger and disgust in her face. She was too upset to notice the pallor of the two men.

"Mr. Jameson just telephoned, doctor. He wants you to come over at once. His head pains are very bad tonight."

"Probably the atmospheric pressure," Wilson said, nodding. "The air is like an oven."

"Probably too much whiskey!" Miss Burke snapped.

Winslow avoided her eyes.

"There's no need for you to come, nurse. It's just a routine treatment. I don't want to subject you to any unpleasant, personal—"

Miss Burke shook her head stubbornly. She was a very pretty girl in her trim outdoor uniform. She had once been fond of riding. But she had stopped going to the Ferndale Riding Academy.

"My antagonism for Sid Jameson is purely a private matter. It has nothing to do with my duty as a nurse. I'm ready to leave as soon as you are."

"Can I give you both a lift in my Ford?" Dan Colter asked.

"No," Winslow said. "It's much shorter if Miss Burke and I take the footpath over the hill. The walk will help to clear my mind of—nonsense"

It was a hint to Colter to keep his mouth shut about the ghostly sound they had just been discussing. Colter obeyed the hint, but he accompanied Winslow and the nurse to the hospital door. He renewed his offer to give them a lift.

Dr. Winslow smilingly declined. He had regained his composure.

It was Dan Colter who was worried now. A queer sense of dread kept growing in him. He forgot about his sister. All he could think of was Dr. Winslow walking that lonely footpath through the woods where thunder rumbled faintly like the beat of invisible hoofs. There were no stars showing. The black sky seemed to scrape the very tops of the trees.

Colter went to his car, but he didn't get in. He reached inside and took a flashlight from a side pocket. Then he walked slowly through the hospital grounds to the rear gate. He followed the path which the doctor and nurse had taken through the woods.

The path wound tortuously. A few drops of rain began to fall, but there was no coolness in them. Wind tugged at the branches of the trees—a hot wind that smelled of dust.

Dan Colter began to hurry behind the zigzag glimmer of his torch. His hand was shaking—he didn't know why.

Suddenly he heard something.

Not thunder. It was a sound that vibrated faintly from the earth. From the path itself—from somewhere behind him.

The muffled hoofbeats of a swiftly galloping horse!

Colter whirled. The hoofs were closer now. He could hear the echoing beat beyond the bend in the path he had just turned.

Then he saw it! He saw—*Death!*

CHAPTER II.

PHANTOM RIDER.

Terror rooted Dan Colter where he stood. No sound came from his dry throat. He was paralyzed with horror.

Straight toward him out of the darkness came the galloping blur of a pale horse with a dreadful rider.

The rider wore a black cloak. Under the hem of the cloak Dan Colter could see dangling feet. They were the fleshless feet of a skeleton! A skeleton hand held the reins!

The head of the rider was bleached and fleshless. It was a white, grinning skull. The fetid stench of a grave rot assailed the nostrils of the terrified man in the path.

Colter flung himself flat, gibbering. For a ghastly instant he lay there, waiting to be trampled to bloody paste. But the steed and the Thing that rode it flew like a pale cloud above the prone figure in the path.

The next moment the apparition was gone. It vanished around the turn in the black path. But the muffled beat of its hoofs was still audible. Colter, too terrorized to move, could hear it.

He lay in a paralyzed huddle where he had fallen. Then, suddenly, the hoofbeats stopped! They didn't fade away. They vanished abruptly into ghastly silence. In the silence Colter could hear the thin beat of wings. Birds in the trees that bordered the black path had taken off in terrified flight.

Colter found the courage to pull himself tremulously to hands and knees. He was kneeling thus, rigid as iron, when he heard the scream!

It was human. The scream of a woman mad with terror! It rose to a raw pitch that made the hair quiver on Colter's scalp. Then a man shouted. Again there was silence.

Every instinct in Colter's shaking body urged him not to move. But he conquered his fright. He had recognized that anguished scream and the horrified cry that had followed it.

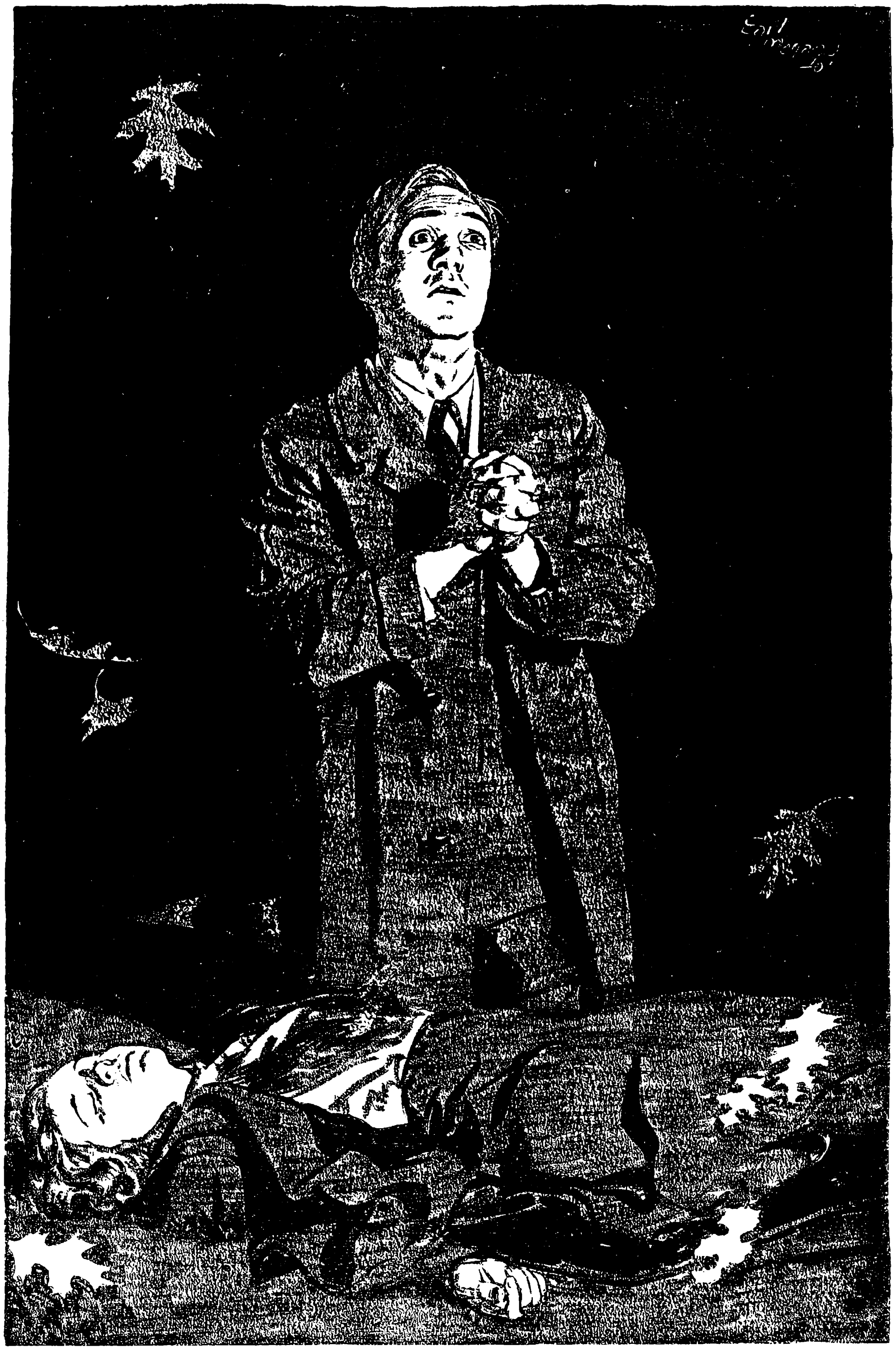
The woman was Miss Burke! The man was Dr. Winslow!

Dan Colter ran forward along the twisting path in a stumbling run. For a while he couldn't see anyone. Then a patch of blackness in the path showed him the two he sought. He could hear the doctor moaning. No sound at all came from the nurse.

Winslow was on his knees, beside the limp figure of Miss Burke. He wasn't looking at her. His face was tilted upward toward the black sky. His hands were clasped tautly together. He was praying in a harsh voice that didn't sound human.

Colter had to clench his own hands to keep from fainting when he leaned close to the sprawled body of the nurse. The front of her starched uniform was a wet smear of blood. Her chest had been caved in by a fearful blow. In her dead, upturned face was a look of unearthly terror.

There was no sign of the pale horse and rider. Colter had lost his own electric torch, but Winslow's flashlight was lying nearby in the dusty weeds at the edge of the path, its lens still aglow. Colter picked it up and tried to find some sign



Winslow was on his knees beside the limp figure of Miss Burke.

of tracks in the bare path.

He found nothing.

The Horseman of Death had left only one grisly proof of his thunderous gallop through darkness. The hoof blow that had smashed in the chest of Miss Burke!

Winslow was still babbling thickly. He swayed to his feet and stood trembling. One hand reached blindly out in front of him as if to steady himself against the empty air.

"Death!" he whispered. "I boasted tonight that I had cheated—Death! I heard it gallop away through the hospital corridor. But it *came back!*"

Colter tried to quiet him. It was useless.

"My nurse was my right arm. She was half of my brain. How can I go on without her?"

It was eerie to hear Winslow's agonized whisper. Colter took the babbling surgeon by the arm and shook him fiercely.

For an instant Winslow straightened. Then he pitched forward in a faint across the body of the nurse.

Dan Colter shivered. He had a sense of being utterly alone in the midst of nameless evil. The woods seemed to crawl with queer, unclean whispers.

Colter began to run. He followed the dark twisting path to its end. Long before he reached it he was bruised and bleeding. He tripped over roots, ran headlong into trees, but he never stopped.

He emerged on a narrow motor road where there were few houses. Colter didn't realize where he was heading, until he saw before him the dark shape of a rather expensive house that stood in a small clearing all by itself.

It was the home of Sid Jameson, the sleek, good-looking owner of the Ferndale Riding Academy.

There was reason for the isolation of this house. Jameson's reputation in town was a poor one. When the former stable boy had tried to purchase a home after his unexpected inheritance of a nest egg from Dr. Winslow's uncle, no one would sell to him. Jameson found it impossible even to purchase a plot on which to build in the best residential section of Ferndale. So he had grinned and shrugged. He had built his home in this sparse, undeveloped section of town, behind the sprawl of woods that lay between the highway and the Ferndale Hospital.

There was plenty of ugly gossip about Sid Jameson and this modern and expensive house of his. He lived alone, except for a woman housekeeper. Or, rather, women housekeepers. Jameson picked them pretty, and he changed often. They looked more like stage beauties than women who had been hired to cook and clean. Sometimes they were blondes, sometimes redheads; but each one of them in turn could have appeared to advantage in a chorus line.

People had complained about it to Judge Rankin. But there was nothing he or the police could do. Moral complaints are not easy to prove, and Jameson would be quick to sue the town for slander. So nothing was ever done.

The place was dark when Dan Colter ran, panting, across the paved road and hurried to the front door. He hated to face the mocking eyes of the riding master. He suspected that Jameson had deliberately contrived the almost fatal fall of his sister from a riding-academy horse. But there was a telephone in Jameson's house. And there wasn't another cottage within a mile.

Trembling with the memory of what he had just witnessed in the woods, Dan Colter jerked at Jameson's bell. There was no answer. No footsteps stirred within the house. Again and again Colter sent wild echoes pealing from the bell—to no avail.

It puzzled him. He remembered, suddenly, why Dr. Winslow and Miss Burke had taken their fatal walk through the woods from the hospital. Jameson had telephoned and asked them to come. He had wanted treatment for severe head pains. Why wasn't he now in the house, waiting for the arrival of the doctor and nurse he had summoned?

Colter sprang down the front steps and ran around the house. His only idea was to get quickly to Jameson's telephone and summon help. He tried a rear window, but the catch was locked. Wildly, he backed away. He began to search feverishly along the dark ground for a stone with which to break the kitchen window.

He was bending close to the ground, when he heard a faint sound that brought him whirling about. From the bushes behind the house a dry twig snapped.

The next instant Dan Colter cried out in hoarse fright.

The bushes were parting stealthily. Something was moving slowly out into the clearing. A horse and a rider— A pale, glimmering blot of a man on horseback under the black sky!

Colter turned to flee. But before he could take more than a step, he heard a harsh, panting voice—a human voice!

"What the hell are you doing there? Stand still!"

The rider leaped soundlessly to the ground. He sprang at Colter. It was Sid Jameson. He was dressed in his usual tweed coat and riding breeches. He looked as neat as a new pin. But the riding master's face was deathly pale. He was breathing in quick gasps.

Colter's bulging eyes stared over Jameson's hunched shoulder toward the horse. It was not a pale, dirty-white as Colter had at first imagined. The livid sheen of the animal was a trick of the peculiar light that came from the massive, low-hanging storm clouds overhead. This horse was a chestnut. And it was wearing a saddle.

The beast that the death rider had ridden had carried neither saddle nor stirrups!

In his relief, Colter babbled meaninglessly until the tight clutch of Jameson made him wince.

"What the hell are you up to? What are you doing here?"

The riding master's handsome lips were drawn into a tight, menacing line. He raised his riding crop as if to brain Colter.

"Trying to meddle around here and get me in trouble, eh? I know what you're after, blast you! You'd like to connect me with the mess that damned fool sister of yours got into! I've a good mind to—"

Colter was no weakling, but he was like a child in the grasp of the powerful Jameson. Feebly, he cried out. He gave a choked account of the dreadful Thing he had seen in the woods.

Jameson stiffened. His hands fell away from his captive. He spoke slowly, almost gently.

"Death himself, eh? A pale skeleton on a pale horse! And the Thing killed Dr. Jameson's pretty nurse? That's too bad. Too bad for Miss Burke, eh?"

Laughter wrenched briefly from his tight mouth. It wasn't a pleasant sound.

"Looks like a tough job for the

police. Trailing down the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse! But that's the police's worry, not mine. I wish them luck. Wait here, sap, and don't move an inch till I come back!"

He sprang forward and unlocked the kitchen door. A light snapped on inside the house. Jameson's voice was faintly audible at the telephone. The stupefaction of Ferndale police headquarters at his fantastic message seemed to amuse Jameson. Colter could hear him chuckle through the open door.

But there was no amusement in Jameson's face when he sprang outside. He darted without a word past Colter and seized the drooping reins of his chestnut horse. He led the animal to a small stable behind the house and locked it inside. Then he sprang close to the paralyzed Colter.

"One more thing, young fellow—I won't want any stupid talk from you on the subject of me and my horse. You can just forget that I was not at home when you rang my bell a little while ago. You don't have to lie about it. Just tell the cops that you ran here to summon help, and I got on my phone and called the police."

"What are you trying to frame up?" Colter whispered through dry lips.

"Not a thing. I just don't want any dumb cops trying to link me up with your ghostly skeleton on horseback, that's all. If you cause me any trouble on that score, I'll—"

His face, thrust close against Colter's was no longer handsome. It was twisted with a fury that changed suddenly to a mask of pain. Jameson groaned and clapped a gloved hand at the base of his skull. Then he slowly recovered from what seemed like a seizure of some sort.

He clutched grimly at Colter's arm and forced him across the road. Together the two vanished into the woods. Colter hung back with instinctive dread, but the blackness and the eerie murmur of leaves seemed to have no terrors for Jameson. He hurried onward with a kind of tense eagerness.

Dr. Winslow still lay unconscious where he had fallen in a faint. Jameson uttered a faint whistle as he saw the dead nurse. There was no horror in his face. He stared at the hoof smash in Miss Burke's chest with no more excitement than a man looking at a mummy in a museum.

He went up and down the dark woodland path with a flashlight, searching for the tracks of the ghostly animal that had vanished into emptiness after its dreadful gallop of death. He found no mark anywhere on the hard earth.

"Your skeleton on horseback was quite a guy," Jameson chuckled. "Looks like he and his horse never touched the ground."

He began to hum faintly the mocking words of a song.

"They fly through the air with the greatest of ease—"

It sounded shocking, almost sacrilegious. Jameson lit a cigarette and sat down with his back against a tree trunk. But his hand with the cigarette shook. He wasn't as jaunty as he wanted Colter to think. There was hysteria in this sleek riding master—a hysteria which he was fighting hard to keep under control.

By the time the police arrived, Sid Jameson had smoked four cigarettes and had half-emptied a pint flask of whiskey from his pocket.

His strong muscular hands no longer shook.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST ARREST.

When Charlie Stark arrived from Ferndale's police headquarters, he brought with him an air of competent efficiency that did much to dispel the grisly horror of the scene on the woodland path.

Lanterns were lit. Under Stark's orders, a plain-clothes man began to search the path carefully. He moved slowly back in the direction from which Colter had first seen the appearance of the ghostly Death Rider. Other men scattered through the woods in an effort to find some trace of hoofprints in the black aisles among the trees.

Charlie Stark was Ferndale's chief of police. He was a tall, lanky man with a shock of yellowish hair almost the color of wheat. His eyes were mild when he smiled. But when he was shocked, those eyes of his could turn as cold and hard as chips of ice. There was rage in his eyes as he listened to Dan Colter's story. Like everyone else in Ferndale, Stark admired Dr. Winslow and his efficient nurse. To see Miss Burke lying there under the glow of police lanterns with a horrible wound in her chest made Charlie Stark grit his teeth.

"I don't believe in ghosts, goblins or devils," he asserted tersely. "Ghosts don't kick in people's chests! A living animal did that—a horse ridden by some flesh-and-blood criminal. And I'm going to discover who it was and send him to the chair!"

"I wish you luck, Stark," Sid Jameson said with his tight smile.

Stark didn't reply, didn't even look his way. There was no love lost between these two. Jameson's nasty reputation where women were concerned made him the direct opposite of the lanky chief of police. Stark hated everything the sleek riding master stood for. He had tried in vain to pin something on Jameson and either jail him or drive him from town. But so far he had found it an impossible task.

He waited, somber and aloof, while his men scrutinized the path and beat through the nearby woods. Dr. Davies, the Ferndale coroner, didn't spend much time over the maimed body of Miss Burke. A single glance was enough to show him how she had died. He shuddered, and turned toward Stark.

"A horse did it. No doubt about that! The imprint of the hoof in her chest is unmistakable. It struck with hellish force. Caved in the whole chest wall with that one blow. Where did the animal go? Surely it couldn't vanish into thin air."

"We'll have a clue pretty soon, I hope," Stark muttered. His eyes got colder. "See if you can revive Dr. Winslow. Maybe he can tell us something."

"It's fantastic," another vo whispered at Stark's shoulder don't believe in ghosts, either. —I'm afraid! Look at the exp sion of that dead girl's face. It's almost as if she died staring into the pit of hell."

The speaker was a tall man like Stark, but he was broader and more comfortably padded around the stomach. He was Judge Rankin. The telephoned alarm from Sid Jameson had brought the judge hurrying to the scene in the car of the coroner. Indeed, the alarm had attracted a good part of the town to the scene. Some of them stood farther up the path, staring with fascinated horror. Others had joined Stark's men in an effort to help with the search.

Dr. Winslow recovered consciousness before they returned. He emerged from his faint with a gasp of terror. Wildly, he fought the restraining hands of the coroner.

Jameson said in a sardonic murmur, "Here! Give him a slug of this!" He offered his flask.

The bite of the liquor calmed Winslow. He never drank, and the stuff burned like flame in his stomach. But bleak despair remained in his eyes.

Charlie Stark spoke gently to him. "Take it easy, doc! You're overwrought, exhausted. You've been working too hard at the hospital for the last few weeks. Certainly *you* should know that lack of sleep does queer things to a man's nerves and vision. Tell me calmly what you saw when Miss Burke was struck down."

"Death! A foul-smelling skeleton in a black cloak—mounted on a pale horse. You think some human criminal killed my nurse? It was Death! I tell you, Stark, I *saw it!* I threw myself aside in terror. Miss Burke too paralyzed to move. The f the Thing kicked her with sh fury. I saw hate in the t's eyes! It galloped onward to the bend in the path—"

"What then? Did you hear the crash of underbrush?"

"I heard nothing. The animal and rider dissolved into thin air. Laugh at that, if you like! Tell me I'm no scientist, but a cracked-brained imbecile!"

No one said a word. The silence was painful until Dan Colter spoke. His voice was barely audible.

"Everything Dr. Winslow says is true," Colter whispered. "I saw exactly what he did. The . . . Thing . . . passed me with the speed of the wind. It could have killed me, but it . . . it didn't seem to *want* me. It smelled like a newly opened grave—a vile stench of decay.

His voice broke.

"If you don't believe Dr. Winslow or myself—why are there no hoofprints? Why didn't the beast *leave tracks?*"

Charlie Stark couldn't answer that. His eyes got tighter when his men returned to report. There were no hoofprints on the earthy path. There was no shred of a clue to indicate that a living animal had escaped into the woods.

"What were you and Miss Burke doing here tonight, doctor?" Stark asked in a mild voice. "Do you usually walk through these woods at night?"

"No. Miss Burke and I were here on duty. We were taking the shortest way to Mr. Jameson's home. He telephoned me at the hospital and told me he was suffering violent head pains. He wanted treatment."

"That's right," Jameson said smoothly. "Colter came tearing over to my house with the news. He was almost nutty with terror, but I wormed the crazy story out of him. I picked up my phone and—"

The sneering menace in the drawl of the riding master did something to snap the lock on Dan Colter's tongue. Up to this moment Jameson's threat to kill him had made the timid Colter clamp his lips and withhold the news of what he had seen behind the riding master's house.

But now he was afraid no longer. He began to shout words at Charlie Stark in an excited babble. At the first sentence, Jameson sprang at him with outthrust hands. He caught Colter by the throat.

"Damn you! You're trying to frame me!"

Stark was like lightning. He struck the powerful riding master in the jaw and sent him reeling back.

"One more stunt like that, Jameson, and I'll plug you!"

"Colter hates my guts! He thinks I had something to do with that accident of his damned sister. He'd do anything to ruin me."

"Why weren't you at home after you told Dr. Winslow you'd be there to receive him? What were you doing riding that horse of yours? Were you in these woods here tonight, Jameson?"

"No. And you can't prove it. Colter will tell you that my horse is a chestnut, not white. Go over to my barn and examine it. And I didn't appear from the direction of these woods, as Colter will verify, if he's not a damned liar. I came from a bridle path on the other side of the highway. I wasn't home tonight because the pains in my head got too bad to endure. I thought that if I took a short canter in the open air it might relieve my suffering."

His hand lifted to the base of his skull for an instant. He closed his eyes. When he opened them again, he was his old sneering self.

"People don't commit murder without a motive. I had nothing against Miss Burke."

Dr. Winslow uttered a sudden interruption.

"You hated her! Miss Burke told me all about it. She had to give up her riding lessons because of the nasty advances you made to her. She told me she was going to get the goods on you and drive you out of town, if it was the last thing on earth she did."

"Poppycock," Jameson jeered. "Miss Burke was like a lot of other pretty dames in this hypocritical little town. I'm a good-looking guy. She made a play for me and I turned her down. Then she swore she'd get revenge. The dirt was on her side, not mine."

It was a vile thing to say. Several men growled and moved menacingly closer. But Charlie Stark restrained them with a curt command. He had heard an excited murmur from another man close to him.

The man was Judge Rankin. His pudgy face was flushed.

"There's more to it than that, Charlie," he told the chief of police. "Jameson, I believe, had good reason to want Miss Burke dead! I didn't mention it before, because I was too shocked by the supernatural aspects of this brutal killing. But I agree with you. No phantom from the grave killed Miss Burke. Why didn't that pale horse kill Dan Colter or Dr. Winslow? That's what I've been thinking about ever since I arrived here and learned what had happened. Colter and Dr. Winslow were not killed because they didn't *menace* anyone. Miss Burke *did!*"

"What do you mean?" Stark asked.

"I mean that earlier this evening I had a telephone call from Miss Burke," Judge Rankin replied. "She was sobbing, terribly upset. She said that Jameson had done something rather horrible. She wanted to talk to me about it."

"I never laid a hand on her!" Jameson snarled.

"Miss Burke wasn't referring to herself," the judge replied sternly. "She was talking about Marion Colter, the girl whose life Dr. Winslow saved tonight by a brilliant operation. Miss Burke said she had found out something that indicated Jameson had deliberately caused the accident to Marion Colter. She wanted my advice about how to present her evidence properly to the public prosecutor."

"What did you tell her, judge?"

"I told her to come and see me in the morning. I promised Miss Burke that if she had any legal evidence to convict Jameson of attempted murder, I'd turn it over to the grand jury and do my best to have him electrocuted if Marion Colter should die."

"Tomorrow morning, eh?" Stark breathed. "She'd have talked tomorrow morning! And tonight—"

Sid Jameson retreated, his face pale, as the chief of police advanced ominously toward him.

"Keep back, Stark! You haven't a thing on me. You haven't a shred of evidence. Find your damned white horse! Find your skeleton in the black cloak! You can't—you *never will!*"

"No? I think I will, Jameson. And in the meantime, you're going into a cell until I can investigate."

"On what charge?"

"On suspicion of homicide."

There was a yell and a rush from the crowd as the riding master turned and tried to flee. But Charlie Stark needed no help. The battle between the two men was over almost before it began. Jameson sagged to the dark path with a groan. Both hands were pressed convulsively over his stomach.

"Sorry I had to do that," the police chief panted, "but you forced me to take you the hard way."

He snapped steel bracelets on the riding master's wrists. The prisoner was forced into a police car, raving and cursing. For some unguessed reason, Sid Jameson seemed to dread being arrested. But manacled, he was no match for the cops who took charge of him.

During the excitement of Jameson's arrest, Dr. Winslow collapsed. The coroner bent over him and looked grave.

"This man has had a terrible shock to his nervous system. On top of that, he's been working like a slave for the past month. He needs rest and treatment. Get him in my car."

A few minutes later, a grim cortege wound out of the woods along the narrow pathway that led to the rear of Ferndale Hospital. In one car went Jameson with two burly cops. Another carried the mangled body of the unfortunate nurse. In the third was the pale figure of Dr. Winslow.

The procession had barely started when there was a terrific flash of lightning. It cut the black sky like the quiver of a jagged sword. It was followed by a deafening peal of thunder.

Rain came down in a sudden torrent. It fell in sheets, as if the lightning flash had ripped the entire sky apart. In two minutes the path through the woods was a foaming mass of inch-deep water. The glare of the police headlights could scarcely penetrate the mist. Bushes scraped and banged against the cars.

Inside the cars the rain was like the sullen thumping of a drum.

But outside, amid the black shapes of wind-blown bushes and tossing trees, the rain made a different sound.

It was like hissing, ice-cold laughter.

CHAPTER IV.

BEATING WINGS.

It was nearly noon the next day when Charlie Stark visited the home of Judge Rankin.

The day was cool and lovely. The electrical storm of the night before had broken the long heat wave. White fleece clouds sailed briskly along overhead in a clear blue sky.

But the chief of police looked

tired. His eyes were red-rimmed. His unkempt shock of yellow hair looked more untidy than ever above his lean, bony face. His clothes were rumpled, as if he had slept in them.

Actually, Charlie Stark had done no sleeping at all. He and every member of the Ferndale homicide bureau had been working all night. They had continued most of the morning.

The net result was zero.

Judge Rankin could tell it by one glance at Stark's gloomy face.

"Nothing new, Charlie?"

"Not a thing. I've been personally over every inch of those damned woods." He smiled faintly. "Reckon I had to. My men would have mutinied if I hadn't endured the slop and discomfort along with them. I drove them at a pretty hard pace."

Any signs of . . . of—"

Rankin didn't finish his hesitant question. But Stark understood.

"Of a pale horse and a skeleton rider? None. There wasn't a hoofprint anywhere. Some of my men are beginning to talk like a lot of fools in town. They claim we'll never find a clue to last night's murder because the horse wasn't flesh and blood."

Judge Rankin drew a faint, hissing breath. He didn't say anything.

"My guess is," Charlie Stark went on stubbornly, "that the downpour last night washed out whatever traces the killer of Miss Burke left. It's a logical explanation, anyhow. And I've got to stick to logic—or I'll go nuts. Ghosts can't kill. That's my story, and I'm going to stick to it."

"How about Sid Jameson?" Judge Rankin asked.

"Still in jail. I took advantage of Jameson's arrest to make a complete search of his home. I found a lot to see there that turned my stomach. You know what I mean—books, pictures, stuff like that. But about the murder last night—nothing."

"What about his horse?"

"It was still in the stable behind the house where young Dan Colter saw him tie it up. A chestnut mare with a beautiful saddle. There was a pail of whitewash in the stable. The whitewash looked as if it had been mixed very recently. But I still don't believe that Jameson's chestnut horse did that death gallop with a coat of paint. And there wasn't a trace of a black cloak or the skeleton outfit that a sly murderer would have to have worn last night."

"I wonder if Jameson's story of those head pains of his is true?" Rankin murmured. "It struck me last night that he was a little dramatic in the way he kept clapping his hand to the base of his skull. Almost as if he wanted to establish the fact that he had a sick man's reason to take that queer horseback ride of his while waiting for the arrival of poor Dr. Winslow."

"The story of his head pains is true," Charlie Stark said glumly. "I checked up on that this morning with Dr. Winslow. He says that Jameson's vicious mode of life has done something to the cortex of his brain. Jameson is really a sick man. Winslow says it would have been unusual if Jameson had *not* clapped his hand to the base of his skull."

"How is the doctor feeling this morning?" Judge Rankin asked.

"Not so good."

The chief of police hesitated.

"His body is O. K. He went to bed, and slept like a stone. This morning he seemed fully refreshed. It's his mind that worries me."

"Good heavens! You don't mean to imply—"

Charlie Stark was surprised at the

judge's vehemence. Rankin's eyes seemed to gleam for an instant. Aware of Stark's surprised look, he turned his face away and stared out the sunlit window, blinking in the strong light.

"If you think that Winslow is in danger of going crazy, you're mistaken," Stark said. "I just mean that his mind is all churned up. He's close to a breakdown from hard work. The gruesome death of his nurse last night capped the climax. He's got queer notions."

"Queer?" Rankin shout the word out eagerly.

"Well, it's about that boast it seems he made after the operation *on Colter's sister. Winslow is con*vinced that Death rode last night to punish him for cheating the grave by his surgical skill. He thinks that Death struck down Miss Burke because she was the one person whose life was essential to his professional career."

"What a horrible thought!"

"Yeah. Only it's screwier than that, judge. Winslow seems certain that Death has declared a sort of war on him. In other words, every time from now on that Winslow saves a human life, he expects Death to strike at someone else in revenge. It sounds silly; but I couldn't shake Winslow's opinion. He's so sure of it that he intends to quit the medical profession!"

Rankin shuddered.

"I think you take his obsession too lightly, Charlie. I think Winslow ought to be examined by a competent alienist. God knows, I'd hate to see him declared incompetent or placed under restraint, but—"

Again the hot gleam flashed for an instant in the judge's eyes. This time Charlie Stark was aware of it. He pretended not to notice. In a quiet way he turned the subject casually to the estate of Dr. Winslow. He asked about the fortune which Winslow had inherited from his dead uncle. He spoke of the charity trust fund which had been turned over to Rankin for administration.

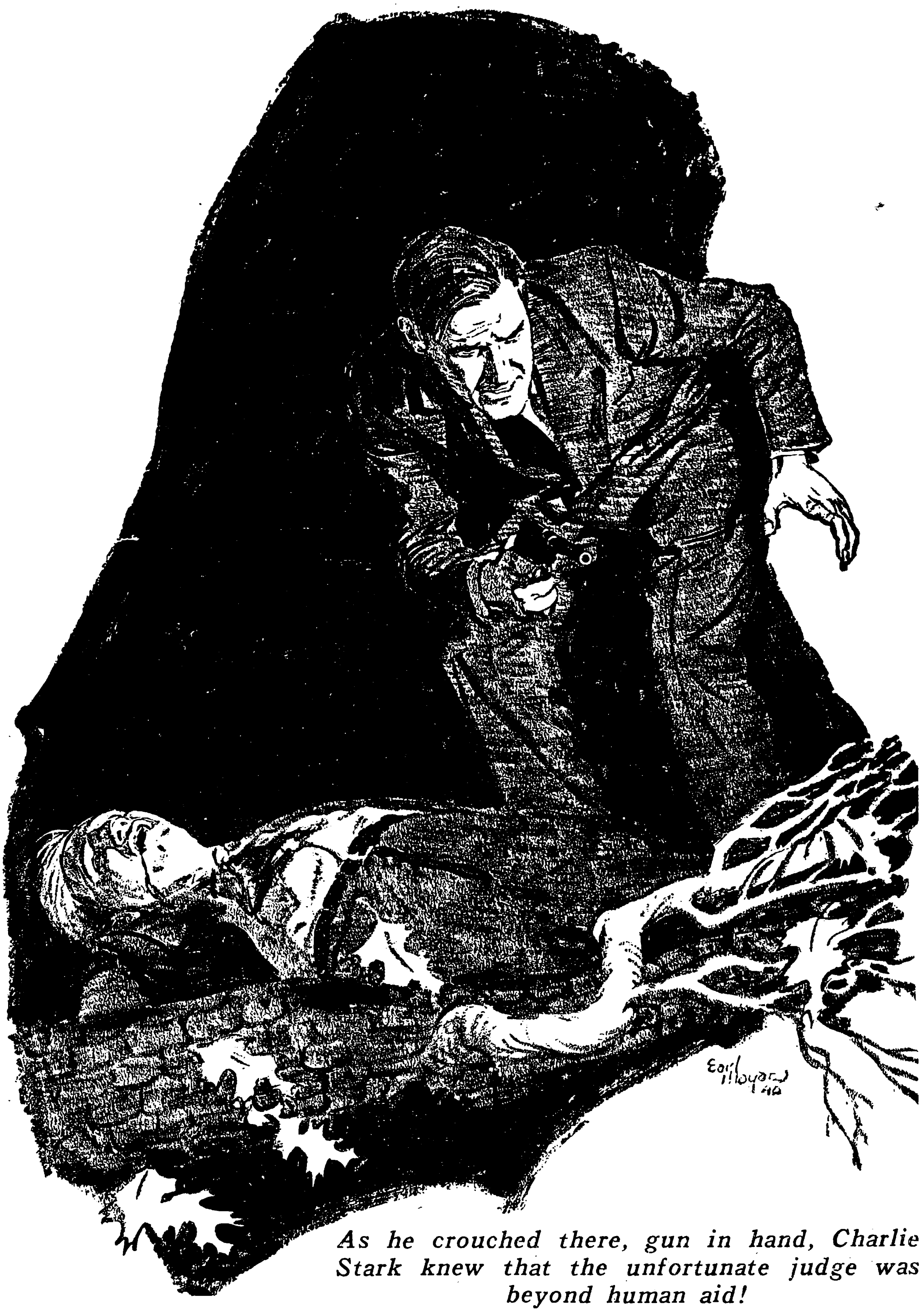
Judge Rankin admitted that the fund was completely in his own charge. He was legally empowered to distribute the interest earnings to whatever charities he saw fit. More than that! If Winslow should die or become mentally incompetent, the entire trust fund became the sole property of Judge Rankin by a legal arrangement already signed by Winslow.

It took a little skill on the part of Stark to worm this last fact out of Rankin. But he didn't comment on it aloud. The possibilities were too sinister. Behind Stark's calm eyes, however, a disturbing thought grew. If someone should happen to drive Winslow to madness by a series of supernatural attacks on people near and dear to him—it would certainly be a profitable piece of misfortune for the pudgy, well-dressed judge.

Stark took his leave in a few moments, promising to let Judge Rankin help him on any special task that might turn up as the result of further investigation on the part of the police.

Ferndale was a county seat. The jail was right in town. Charlie Stark drove there, his lips a tight line. His suspicion of the judge's financial set-up hadn't dulled his eagerness to have another talk with Sid Jameson. There were a couple of questions in Stark's mind to which he was anxious to have answers.

He found Sid Jameson a lot different from the snarling, cursing man he had arrested the night before. The riding master was his old



As he crouched there, gun in hand, Charlie Stark knew that the unfortunate judge was beyond human aid!

sneering self. A cop brought him from his cell to the small room where the interview took place. Jameson bowed sardonically as the cop withdrew, leaving him and the chief of police alone.

"You don't seem worried," Stark murmured, watching him sharply.

Jameson's laughter was easy and assured.

"Why should I worry? You're the guy to worry, you cheap small-town Sherlock! You made a dumb play last night. You jailed me without a shred of evidence. I'll be out of here before the day is over—and you know it. I've got a lawyer preparing a writ of habeas corpus right now. This afternoon I'll walk into the courtroom. They'll ask you what evidence you have to warrant holding me on suspicion of murder. Then you'll open your big, stupid mouth and say—nothing! I'll walk out of here at dusk, a free man."

Jameson's laughter clinked like ice.

"Yes, dusk. Just about the nicest time to get out. When the gray shadows are beginning to drop low over Death Woods. Did you know that's what the dear townspeople are already calling the place? Death Woods!"

Stark's voice rasped.

"Is that a murder threat?"

"I hate your guts, chief. You've been searching my house—you don't have to tell me that. You've pawed through my personal belongings. My advice to you is to drop your investigation of Miss Burke's sad end. And if you're smart, you'll keep out of Death Woods."

"You'll find me a harder victim to kill, Jameson, than that unfortunate nurse of Winslow's."

Jameson's laughter purred.

"Don't be silly, chief. I don't have to kill anyone. I got a pal working for me. A graveyard gent with no flesh on his bones. A rider on a pale horse that doesn't leave any hoof-prints!"

Stark took him up sharply on the last remark.

"By the way, Jameson, do you happen to own a white horse?"

"You looked in the stable behind my house, wise guy! My horse was chestnut, as you saw with your own eyes."

"I'm talking about your riding academy."

"The answer is still no. Not a white horse in the place. Go over and have a look. Only be damned careful while you're there. My riding academy is in a dangerous locality for a nosy chief of police. It's right at the fringe of Death Woods—at the opposite end from the hospital grounds. And you'd better keep away from the bridle paths where I rode my chestnut mare last night!"

Jameson's handsome lips curved in a mocking grimace.

"You see, Death is a very unpopular guy. So am I. That makes us pals. I've got a hunch Death will be apt to protect me."

Stark couldn't get anything more out of the man. But he took the grinning Jameson at his word. He made another visit to the riding master's home. With a half-dozen plainclothes men from headquarters, Stark made another and closer search of the riding paths on the opposite side of the motor highway. This was the locality where Jameson had ridden his chestnut mare ostensibly to "clear his head of pain" while he waited for Dr. Winslow and Miss Burke to take their fatal walk from the hospital.

Charlie Stark drew a blank. He also drew another one in the courtroom later in the afternoon. The habeas corpus hearing resulted in exactly what Jameson had predicted. In the absence of any legal evidence of complicity in the death of Miss Burke, he was released.

Jameson swaggered out into the graying dusk. He owned a big car, but he didn't use it. His chestnut mare was tied up outside the courthouse as a defiant gesture. Jameson mounted it and rode slowly toward his home, while silent townspeople watched him with worried eyes.

Stark cursed under his breath. He could hear frightened whispers. He noted how quickly the streets were clearing. People were afraid to remain outdoors after the setting of the sun. A reign of terror was beginning to build up in this quiet and lovely little suburban town.

Stark got into his own car and started to drive out to the riding academy of the sleek Jameson. He was part way there when a strange furrowed look came into his eyes. He turned his car around abruptly and drove back to the home of Judge Rankin.

He invited Rankin to go to the riding academy with him.

"I promised to let you in on any further investigation angles, judge," Charlie Stark murmured.

Rankin accepted the invitation with alacrity.

The riding academy was, as Jameson had said, just at the far edge of the woods that stretched between the hospital and the outer section of town. The woods formed roughly a triangle, with the riding academy at the most distant point from where Miss Burke's ghastly murder had occurred. The extent of the woods in this direction was not much more than a mile. But it took longer by the motor road. The road curved to the west and made a long winding approach through farmlands.

The academy was a low-built series of connected buildings of whitewashed brick. The rear almost touched the dark foliage of the woods. It was still clear and sunlit out in the open. But the woods were already a grayish haze.

Stark and Judge Rankin soon found out there were no white horses in Jameson's academy. But a talk with Clancy put a different aspect on the problem. Clancy was the hostler. He was a thin, hopeless-looking sort of man with scared eyes. He didn't want to talk. Stark's threat of arrest made him cringe and unsealed his frightened lips.

"You won't let Jameson beat me?" Clancy begged.

"No. You needn't be afraid. You'll be protected."

Clancy drew a deep breath. He admitted that there had been a white horse in the stable up to a few weeks ago. But the horse had been sold.

"To whom?"

A man named Bishop had bought it, Clancy whispered. Jameson had warned the hostler to say nothing about the sale, to deny that there had ever been a white horse in the academy stables. Clancy couldn't understand why. Bishop was an ordinary farmer, and the horse was a gentle animal. That was why Bishop had bought it. He owned a small farm about twenty miles out in the country."

"Thanks," Stark said curtly. "Don't worry about Jameson. If he bothers you, the police will take care of him."

His glance shifted to Judge Rankin.

"How about it, judge? Are you up to taking another look in Death Woods? In the stretch here behind Jameson's academy?"

Rankin was very pale. But his words crackled with eagerness.

"I think we ought to. But what about Jameson? He's been released from jail. He—"

Stark turned to Clancy.

"Call up Jameson's home," he told the trembling hostler. "I want to find out if he's there right now. Tell him one of his horses has colic. Ask him if he wants to come out and help."

Clancy was scared, but he obeyed. There was a brief, growling reply on the wire. Clancy hung up with a shaking hand.

"Jameson told me to go to hell and attend to the horse myself. He said he'd beat me within an inch of my life if I didn't cure the animal. He sounded thick and stumbling in his words. I think he's drinking."

"Good!" Judge Rankin said. "That removes the danger of interference. Let's go!"

He led the way into the woods. Stark followed slowly, keeping his thoughts to himself. Rankin's eagerness to make a search along those tangled paths through an ominous and growing dusk revived Stark's suspicion of the man. Rankin kept pressing ahead, careless of whether Stark kept up or not.

Finally they came to a fork in the path. Stark allowed Rankin to take one branch. He took the other.

As soon as he was alone, Stark drew a gun from his pocket. There was a grim possibility that the Pale Horseman might ride again among these damp bushes! The rain of the night before seemed to make that idea ridiculous. Most of the ground was soft with mud. No horse could gallop over them without leaving a deeply indented trail of hoof marks.

And yet—

Charlie Stark had a rather uneasy feeling that this time Death might be getting ready to take a crack at *him!* He couldn't see Rankin. The judge had passed completely from sight along the branching trail. What was he up to? Why was he so quiet?

Standing in rigid silence, his ears tuned to catch the slightest sound, Charlie Stark took the safety off his gun.

Then he heard a soft, blurring noise. It came from the direction in the darkening woods where Judge Rankin had vanished.

It was the rustle of beating wings. Birds—dozens of them—were flying up out of the trees in a frightened covey!

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND DEATH.

For an instant Charlie Stark stood motionless, his hand taut on his gun. A sense of unearthly dread made his heart pound. He shouted a warning to his hidden partner.

"Judge! Judge Rankin! Are you all right?"

There was no reply. The shadowy woods had lapsed into stillness. Stark gulped. He began to run back toward the spot where the forked paths joined.

Before he could take three steps a dreadful scream rang out through the leafy dimness. It was the cry of a human being in mortal terror!

The sound of that scream froze Stark in his tracks. The hair quivered on his scalp.

It was then he heard the hoofbeats!

They raced with swift, drumming speed. The hoofs of a fast-flying horse! The sound dwindled rapidly. Dimmer, dimmer— Then, abruptly —silence! Nothing, except the throb of blood in Stark's listening ears, and the terrified hammering of his heart.

He was human enough not to want to approach that place where Judge Rankin had screamed. But he forced himself to run as hard as he could to the spot where the two paths met.

Turning the bend, he darted along the other path. In a few moments he was staring down at an inert human figure. It was Rankin!

One horrified glance showed Charlie Stark that the unfortunate judge was beyond human aid. He lay flat on his back at the edge of tangled underbrush. His face was twisted into a mask of agonized terror.

His chest had been smashed in with a single hellish blow!

Stark forced himself to look at that bleeding, caved-in chest. The mark was unmistakable. The blow that had killed Rankin had been made by the hoof of a horse!

But there was no sign of a ghostly beast or a black-cloaked skeleton rider. Stark gritted his teeth. It wasn't a ghost! It couldn't be! Ghosts couldn't kill— But how could a living horse vanish into nothingness so swiftly? Not more than thirty seconds had elapsed since Stark had heard the judge's scream. Where had horse and rider gone?

The path was growing darker. But there was still enough light filtering down through the treetops to allow Stark to examine the ground carefully. -He saw no trace of hoof tracks. Neither near the body, nor at any distance!

And this path itself was not hard-baked as the one had been at the spot where Miss Burke had been killed. It was slimy with soft mud.

The running feet of Stark had made great sliding marks in the path. The marks led straight to Rankin's body. Beyond the corpse was only smooth and unmarred mud.

Stark's eyes swung toward the underbrush at the edge of which Rankin lay. With sweating palms clenched, he told himself fiercely that a human killer had ridden swiftly off through the bushes to some hidden spot deeper in the woods. It was a ridiculous explanation, and Stark dismissed it instantly. A horse—a real flesh-and-blood animal—couldn't have escaped that way without the crashing sound of bushes. And there had been no sound—except the drumming of hoofs!

Stark found himself shuddering—praying!

Suddenly he sniffed. There was a strange reek of pollution in the air. He remembered what Dan Colter had babbled the previous night.

"A grave smell!" Colter had gasped. "The earth-stench of a newly opened grave!"

Stark realized with horror where the smell was coming from. He bent slowly. He had to force himself to do it. But he sniffed at the bloody hoofprint that had caved in Rankin's chest.

The grave smell came from the wound!

It snapped the last strained cord of self-control in Charlie's brain. He whirled from the corpse with a bubbling cry. Down the path he ran as if the pale Beast of Death was after him. He slipped and fell half a dozen times before he gained the open air beyond the woods. He was a horrible sight; mud-smeared, wild-eyed. He began to run toward the whitewashed rear of Jameson's riding academy.

The open air and the sight of familiar things whipped away his temporary madness. But he was still shaking with terror when he ran into Clancy, the hostler.

Clancy uttered a hoarse yell at the sight of Stark's face and mud-smeared clothing.

"In Heaven's name—what's the matter?"

"Quick! Get on the telephone! Call Ferndale headquarters. Tell them to rush every man on duty here at once. There's been another killing in Death Woods. Tell them that Judge Rankin has been kicked to death by a . . . a horse."

"Merciful heavens!" Clancy whispered. He went white to the lips. "Don't go away, sir. Stay here—with me!"

But Stark eluded Clancy's terrified clutch. He ran toward the lane where he had parked his car. He sprang into it and started his engine with wild haste. With a roar, the car sped along the lane. It skidded onto the concrete motor highway.

Charlie Stark increased his speed. He drove toward the home of Sid Jameson. The rush of wind helped to clear the superstitious terror from his mind. Jameson had to be guilty! If guilty—he wouldn't be at home.

But Sid Jameson *was* at home. Stark had barely rung the front door bell when the door opened. Jameson's flushed face appeared.

He was breathing heavily. His hands were trembling. But his clothing was neat and clean. He smelled strongly of whiskey.

Stark shoved him backward and sprang into the house. He slammed the door behind him.

"Whazz mazzer?" Jameson mumbled.

He clutched at the door casing as he stumbled and almost fell down.

"You been here all evening?" Stark rasped.

"Sure. Whaz all the fuss?"

Stark pushed past him. There was a bottle of whiskey on the table and the chief of police made for it. He picked it up brusquely and held it to the light. Then he whirled toward the riding master with a snarling cry.

"Drunk, eh? Is that your alibi?"

"Can't a man get drunk if he feelsh like it?"

"You're a damned liar! You're not drunk. You're only faking it! There's been just two drinks taken from this bottle. Two drinks for a man like you is like two sips of water. You took just enough liquor to make your breath stink of alcohol!"

Sid Jameson straightened. All the fake stupor went out of his voice. His words clanged like steel.

"There's only one reason why you'd come racing in here like this, chief. The Death Horse has kicked off another victim! Don't tell me. Let me guess!"

The jeering smile on his dissolute face grew thinner. His even teeth showed in a white line.

"Was the unfortunate victim—Judge Rankin?"

"Damn you! How do you know it was Rankin?"

"A little bird told me," Jameson chuckled.

It was a dreadful sound, that dry mirth of his. But his words made Stark think of a sound even more dreadful—the fluttering wings of dozens of birds wheeling up into the air from the spot where Rankin had been struck down.

"Go ahead and arrest me," Jameson continued, his colorless lips still grinning. "A fine fool you'll make of yourself! They'll be calling me Finnegan pretty soon. In again—out again—Finnegan! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Stark knew he had no shred of proof to hold this man for murder. His wild auto dash had been a complete waste of time. He turned abruptly on his heel and left the house.

He drove back with clamped lips to the riding academy.

He found a scene of wild confusion. The reserves from police headquarters were there and a great many of the townspeople. The news of

Judge Rankin's death had spread like wildfire. Dusk had settled into darkness. Headlights of parked cars and the shine of police lanterns made an eerie sight. Men were shouting at one another in a welter of confusion.

Charlie Stark's deputy drew him aside. He spoke quietly at his ear.

"I think we ought to comb those woods without too much delay. I went in with two men, but you can't do much in that blackness with lanterns. I called up a representative of the power company. He's brought workmen with some feed cable and a couple of big floodlights. They're working on it now. Is that O. K.?"

"Yeah. Tell 'em to hurry things up! Post a couple of men in the woods to see that no one messes up the ground near Rankin's body."

"I've already done that, chief."

Stark turned abruptly away from his subordinate. There was a shrill murmur from the packed crowd of townspeople in the lane. The murmur of the crowd was drowned out by the roar of a speeding car.

An automobile came to a shrieking halt as its brakes went on. Out of it sprang a man.

The man was Dr. Winslow. He ran straight toward Charlie Stark with staggering haste. His face was drawn.

"Charlie! For God's sake—tell me!"

"What's the matter, doc?"

"I heard a rumor that there's been another killing! They said that Judge Rankin—"

"It's true!"

Winslow reeled. But he recovered when he felt the strong clutch of Stark's sinewy hand.

"What time did Rankin die?" he gasped.

"About three quarters of an hour ago. That would make it about a quarter of eight."

Winslow's voice seemed to go suddenly dead. Words came from him like a lifeless flowing of sound.

"I knew it! It was my fault! Tonight—at a quarter of eight by the clock—I cheated Death!"

There was a sigh of horror from the crowd.

"What do you mean?" Stark snapped.

"Tonight I was called out on an emergency case. I refused to go at first, but every other surgeon at the hospital was busy. I went to the home of a family out in the country. It was a peritonitis case—a bad one. The man's appendix had burst before I got there. He was dying."

No one in the closely packed crowd uttered a sound.

"I saved that man's life," Dr. Winslow went on dully. "I told his wife the same fatal thing I told the brother of Marion Colter last night. '*This man will live—*' She said to me—how can I forget what she said? —'doctor, thank God! It's like—*cheating Death!*' "

He raised his face. In the lights from the automobile lamps Winslow's eyes were tragic.

"I glanced at the clock on the wall opposite the sick man's bed. So did his wife. Gentlemen, the hands of the clock pointed to *a quarter of eight!*"

CHAPTER VI.

HORROR STALKS.

A whisper of horror passed through the crowd.

But Charlie Stark had no time to worry about a growing public panic. The experts from the power company had strung their feed lines and set up floodlights in the woods. Stark led his men back to the murder scene.

The coroner knelt and examined the body of Judge Rankin.

"Exactly the same as Miss Burke," he reported tonelessly. "The judge was killed instantly. No doubt about the manner of his death. His chest was caved in by the kick of a horse. The imprint of its hoof is unmistakable."

Stark's voice sounded thin.

"If a horse killed him, where are the tracks when the . . . the Thing fled? I heard it gallop! It couldn't have escaped through the underbrush. The noise would have been audible. And no horse ever foaled could gallop down this muddy path without leaving the print of its hoofs."

"I guess that's your problem, chief," the coroner said unsteadily. His face was strained under the glare of the lights. "I wish you luck. Me, I'm getting out of these woods before anything else happens!"

He picked up his medical kit and hurried away. Charlie Stark's men looked at him uneasily. Most of them felt just like the coroner.

Stark turned in a slow circle. His eyes swept every inch of the scene. He had already looked through the underbrush on both sides of the path. There were tiny trails on both sides, but they seemed to lead nowhere.

The boulder about twenty feet ahead was the only possible thing that might account for so strange a disappearance of the phantom horse.

It was a tremendous boulder, wider at its base than its top. It rested close to the path near the edge of a three-foot bank. To the desperate Stark, the boulder might possibly conceal the hiding place of a cunning killer.

"Horse and rider could not have gone very far after the kill," he pointed out harshly. "I heard the sound of hoofs for barely twenty seconds after Judge Rankin screamed. If there's nothing hidden under that boulder, I'll agree that we're fighting a phantom from the grave!"

He set his men to work. Shovels and crowbars were obtained. The men worked with sweating zeal. Some of them cut away the bank on which the edge of the boulder rested. The rest pried steadily with their steel bars.

It was long, hard labor. Dynamite would have been simpler. But there was no store of dynamite in town—and no experts to handle it, even if explosives could have been obtained. Besides, there would have to be heavy crash mats and a lot of other equipment if danger to life was to be avoided.

Stark urged his tired men on, occasionally seizing a crowbar himself and heaving fiercely.

It was more than an hour before the boulder quivered. A yell went up. More men leaped to the task. Slowly the great rock tilted. It toppled over the cut-away edge of the bank with a tremendous crash. The earth bed in which it had rested was laid bare. It looked like a shallow crater.

Stark's deputy was closest to the crater. He took one glance and yelled. His gun leaped to his hand. With a quick, convulsive gesture he fired.

Stark sprang forward, his own gun ready. But he saw no phantom from the grave. The thing the deputy had fired at was a squirming rattlesnake whose nest had been under the rock. The bullet from the deputy's gun had severed its head. The snake whipped around blindly with a bloody stump where its head had been. The deputy fired two more shots into the quivering coils before they relaxed.

There was no sign of a cave beneath the boulder. A lot of backbreaking toil had added up to zero!

Charlie Stark quit. He called off his men in a voice that was so tired it was barely audible. His head was splitting with weariness. He had not slept a wink in more than twenty-four hours—not since the death of Winslow's unfortunate nurse.

"What next, chief?" his deputy muttered.

"Nothing. Leave a couple of men on guard. But not in here! Post them outside the woods where the path enters. I'm going home to bed. I'll be dead myself if I don't get a few hours sleep."

He went wearily out to the lane in front of Jameson's riding academy. He was crawling into his car when he saw Dr. Winslow. The doctor looked ghastly. Stark went over and took him by the arm. Winslow made no effort to resist when the chief of police helped him into the car.

Stark headed toward the Ferndale Hospital. He spoke gently to the surgeon.

"You'd better get some sleep, doc. If you don't, you'll collapse."

"I can't sleep," Winslow moaned. His eyes were glassy. "Two dead! My fault! I've come to the end. I'll never treat another human being!"

"Why don't you leave Ferndale for a while?" Stark asked gently. "You'll go nuts if you stay here."

"Yes, yes! But where?"

Stark mentioned a town. It was about thirty miles away. Smaller than Ferndale; with a quiet inn that was frequented mostly by elderly people. Winslow nodded listlessly.

Stark went with him through the hospital grounds to the doctor's cottage. He helped Winslow to undress and put him to bed. Then he phoned to the hospital office for a nurse.

"Sleep!" Winslow grated, his eyes bright. "I want to sleep. Give me an opiate, for God's sake!"

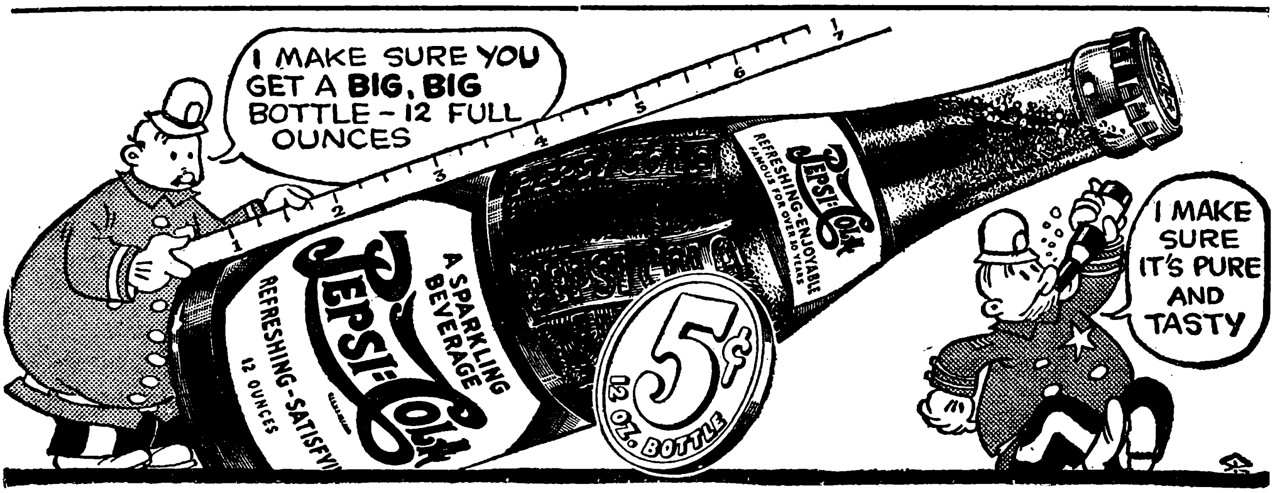
Stark glanced at the nurse. She nodded.

"I'll leave this accursed town tomorrow," he gasped, "as soon as I wake up."

"When will he wake up, nurse?" Stark asked.

"Probably not until noon tomorrow at the earliest."

"Good! Winslow needs every ounce of sleep he can get. When he wakes, help him pack his bag. Get him started in his car. He'll break



mentally if he stays here."

The nurse agreed. Stark himself was close to the breaking point, but he took time to telephone headquarters. He ordered them to put a plain-clothes man on guard outside the home of Sid Jameson.

"Tell him not to show himself," he rasped. "If Jameson leaves by horseback or in his car—trail him. If he tries to enter Death Woods—arrest him!"

It was past nine when Charlie Stark awoke the next morning. His head was clear and his hands were steady. He telephoned his deputy and drove out with him to the home of Abner Bishop. Bishop was the farmer who had bought, according to Jameson's hostler, the only white horse in the riding academy.

Bishop's farm was a small one in the valley between the railroad and the river. He was a tall, cadaverous man with large red ears, and eyes as bright and inquisitive as a squirrel's.

Bishop seemed friendly enough, however. He admitted he had bought the white horse. But he didn't have it any longer, he said. It had been stolen.

"Stolen? When?"

Bishop amplified. The horse had been stolen one night about a week earlier. A thief had broken the cast-iron hasp of the barn padlock. Bishop hadn't reported the theft because he was too busy to take the trip into town.

"What were you doing night before last?"

"Haying. Remember how it rained? I had to work like heck to get the stuff in dry."

"Had to hire extra helpers, eh?"

"No. All by myself. Other fellers were too busy."

Stark stared at a huge pile of dishes in the kitchen sink.

"Wife away, Bishop?"

"Yeah." His squirrel eyes flicked and glanced away. "Wife went to visit her folks. Week ago, chief. Come to think of it, 'twas the day before I had the horse stolen from me."

"Let's have a look at your barn."

It was just as Bishop had said. The barn was empty. A broken padlock still hung on a snapped hasp. But Stark noticed something unusual within. A pail of feed was standing near the empty stall. Fresh hay was piled up in the manger from the chute overhead.

"What's the idea?" Stark asked sharply. "No horse—and you're all ready to feed him?"

The stuff was for his cow, Bishop explained. The cow's quarters were leaky. He always kept her feed in this building. Kept it fresher and drier.

Stark didn't pursue the point. He left the farm soon afterward. But on the way back to town, his lips stayed in a hard straight line.

"I don't like that guy Bishop," Stark's deputy said.

"Me, neither. He seems a sly devil. He could easily be lying about the theft of that white horse."

Stark sounded troubled.

"On the other hand, what possible motive could Bishop have for killing people? That slyness of his might not mean a thing. Many farmers are pretty much like that; they live so much by themselves that they become foxy and secretive every time a stranger shows up—particularly a policeman."

"I think Bishop ought to be watched."

"Don't worry! He will be. Put a man near his place as soon as we get to headquarters. Have the man keep out of sight. I want the same procedure followed that I ordered for Jameson. If Bishop sneaks away from his farm day or night—trail him. If he tries to enter Death Woods—arrest him."

Stark drove swiftly toward headquarters. Then, suddenly he changed his mind.

"I think I'll have another talk with Jameson," he said in a worried tone. "That last interview with him puzzles me. Jameson was too cocky. He sounded as if he was holding back something. I think I'll spring a murder accusation against Bishop on him—suddenly. We'll see what his reaction is."

He stopped at a Ferndale pay station and had his deputy make arrangements by phone to cover Bishop. He also told of his plan to visit the riding master for another grilling.

Stark parked his car out of sight of the Jameson house. He wanted to have a brief chat with the officer he had placed on guard. But he couldn't find the man. It was only after they had circled the house and approached it from the rear that they saw the plain-clothes officer.

Stark and his deputy uttered a simultaneous cry of rage.

The plain-clothes cop was lying in a limp huddle near the garage. He had been slugged over the head. The door of the garage was wide open.

The house was empty, as Stark had expected. He raced downstairs after a hasty scrutiny of every room. He was about to hurry out to where his deputy was still trying to rouse the slugged plain-clothes cop, when he halted suddenly.

Jameson's telephone bell was ringing loudly!

Stark whirled and located the instrument in a front room. He muffled his voice to a growl like Sid Jameson's.

"Yeah? Whatcha want?"

"Stark! Is this you, chief?"

It was the cop at the police headquarters switchboard.

"It's about Dr. Winslow! He left town as you ordered. He's calling from that inn where you sent him to rest. He sounds terrified! He called up headquarters and I told him you had gone to interview Jameson. He wants to talk to you at once. Says it's a matter of life and death! Shall I switch the call, sir? He's still on the wire."

"Gimme him, quick! Hello, Dr. Winslow?"

"Stark? For God's sake—watch the woods! I'm afraid of—Death!"

"What do you mean?"

Winslow's shrill voice raced. He had had an automobile accident near the inn where he had gone. It wasn't his fault. He couldn't help it. He had collided with another car, had pinned it against a tree. The other driver's throat had been badly gashed.

"What of it?" Stark rasped.

"He was bleeding to death. Only the fact that I was a doctor saved his life. Don't you see? I saved that motorist's life! *I—cheated Death—*"

Winslow's voice faded. There was throbbing silence. Then the calmer voice of the man at Ferndale headquarters returned to the wire.

"He sounds nutty to me, chief. Any orders?"

"Send every available cop you can get hold of to Death Woods! There's something devilish brewing! Jameson has vanished! He slugged his guard and disappeared with his car!"

Stark slammed down the receiver. Outside Jameson's house the deputy was still working vainly over the unconscious plain-clothes man. Stark's quick order pulled his deputy to his feet. The two men raced to where they had parked their own car. They went whizzing along the highway—back to the riding academy at the edge of Death Woods.

The place seemed peaceful enough at the end of its dirt lane. There was no sign of the riding master's car. But a thick clump of bushes bulged too far out over the drive. They found the missing car hidden behind the shrubbery. It was empty.

Stark raced into the riding academy with his deputy at his heels. He shouted for Clancy, the hostler. There was no reply. The echoes of Stark's shout sounded eerie and ominous. He raced up the stairs to the hostler's room. The door was closed, but not locked.

Stark flung it open. Then he stood very still. The hostler lay in a pool of blood on the floor. Clancy had met death, but not from the hoof of a ghost horse. His end had come with merciful speed.

A knife had been driven into his heart.

CHAPTER VII.

KILLERS ALWAYS SLIP.

Stark's eyes surveyed the room grimly. Clancy's struggle had been brief—but there *had* been a struggle. The carpet was rumpled. A chair had been overturned.

Stark righted the chair. As he lifted it, he noticed that there was a small lump beneath the rumpled edge of the carpet. Kneeling quickly, he fished out an object that had apparently rolled there out of sight during the death struggle between Clancy and his killer.

It was a cone-shaped piece of hard vulcanized rubber. The outside surface was jet-black and smoothly finished. But the end of the object was rather badly chipped. It didn't look like a fresh break. There were a few bits of gray fluff adhering to it that could not have come from the carpet in the riding academy. Clancy's carpet was turkey-red and had a smooth finish on both sides.

"What the devil is it?" Stark's deputy asked wonderingly.

There was a strange look on Stark's face.

"I believe I know the truth! It's ghastly, it's unbelievable—but it's sane. We're fighting no ghost rider from hell! Those crimes in the wood were committed by a flesh-and-blood criminal. And he's in these woods now—waiting. *For me,* I think!"

He turned from the death room and raced down the stairs. His deputy kept close at Stark's heels as he headed toward the dark fringe of trees.

Suddenly Stark halted. He drew his gun and made sure it was ready for action. He was smiling queerly.

"You stay here! I think the way to trap our killer is for me to go in—alone."

The deputy protested. But Stark overruled him.

"Stay here. At the edge of the wood. The reserve from headquarters will arrive any moment. Don't stir an inch until you hear the blast of my whistle. Then come in—and for God's sake, *come fast!*"

Stark left before his deputy could argue about the mad risk he was taking.

He walked quietly onward to the fork in the path where Judge Rankin had left him the night before. He turned left and hurried to the spot where Rankin had died.

Sid Jameson was lying in the same place where Rankin had been struck down!

Jameson's face was a mask of horror. His body was still warm, but quite dead. The front of his chest had been caved in by the hoof of a horse. There were no hoof marks on the muddy path to show where the Death Rider had vanished.

Yet Charlie Stark smiled grimly as he knelt for an instant beside the corpse of the riding master. He sniffed at the wound in Jameson's chest. He detected instantly the odor of putrefaction. A nauseating reek of the grave.

Stark straightened with a loud exclamation of simulated terror. Once more he knelt. This time he seemed forgetful of everything except the bloody corpse below his staring eyes.

He knelt with his back to the dense shrubbery at the edge of the path. But one hand remained under the loose flap of Stark's coat. The palm of the other hand was cupped.

Inside that palm was a small pocket mirror. With his eyes glued to the tiny mirror slant, Stark could see a faint movement of the bush behind his bent body.

An arm appeared, an arm that was robed in black. Then, suddenly, Stark caught a glimpse of the killer!

It was a paralyzing sight. The head was a fleshless skull! Teeth grinned vacantly in bony jaw sockets. The black-robed arms lifted soundlessly. Gloved hands were clutching a terrible weapon—a sledge hammer!

The hammer swung downward with terrific force.

Had it landed it would have crushed in his spine. But he flung himself aside just in time. The weapon struck harmlessly at the earth. The robed killer fell awkwardly to hands and knees in the path.

Stark writhed upward. But the killer was even faster. A knife jerked from beneath his cloak. Its blade was stained with fresh crimson. It stabbed at the heart of Charlie Stark.

He felt the rip of cloth and the sharp pain of a slicing point as he twisted aside. Then Stark's gun roared.

Three times the echo of its flaming muzzle echoed in the dim woods. All three bullets smashed into the robed body of the killer. He cried out shrilly, spun in a tight circle—and collapsed in a writhing heap. The groans from behind that fleshless mask were human ones—the sound of a man who had suffered a mortal hurt.

With a bound, Charlie Stark gained his feet. His police whistle shrieked. He could hear shouts from his advancing men.

The reserves from headquarters shrank back from the sight of Jameson's corpse and the feebly moaning killer.

"Bishop?" gasped Stark's deputy.

"Not Bishop," Stark said. He sounded tired, drained of all life. "If you'll remove that plastic mask, so cleverly contrived to look like a skull, you'll find a criminal so cunning that I never suspected him until the very last. A depraved killer and a master of hypocrisy. *Dr. Winslow!"*

No one present believed him. No one moved to touch the revolting mask. It was Stark himself who ripped it away. His prediction was correct. The contorted and dying face of Dr. Winslow stared up at the awed policemen.

"Greed, doctor!" Stark accused sternly. "Wasn't that it? A fortune from your dead uncle—money that you pretended you had turned over to charity of your own free will?"

Winslow could barely talk. He

knew he was dying. But his lips twisted in a jeering smile.

"You got me, Stark! You forced me to try one murder too many. I wanted money! I killed my uncle to get it. With a poison not easily detected. But Judge Rankin suspected. He had one small bit of proof that might have led to my conviction. He told me he'd keep quiet if I turned the fortune over to him for charitable purposes. He made me also give up every penny I earned that I didn't need for personal expenses."

"You see, I had once saved his daughter's life when she was almost drowned years before. Rankin couldn't bear to send me to the chair. He told me that my surgical skill would help the world far better than my—electrocution."

Stark spoke grimly.

"Judge Rankin made a terrible mistake—covering up murder. He paid for it with his own life. Deservedly! Why didn't you kill him first?"

"Miss Burke had heard me rave against Judge Rankin. She knew that I was greedy for money. I had to remove her first, or she'd have accused me of Rankin's murder. Jameson, I didn't plan on as a victim. He sealed his own doom when he put two and two together after Rankin's death. He sneaked over here to see if he could get material for blackmail—and I let him have it!"

Winslow's voice faded. He tried to rise. Then a quiver passed over his body. Blood oozed from his lips. His eyes went blank with death.

Stark pointed to the sledge hammer. It was a horrible device to simulate the hoof of a horse. One end of the sledge was a steel replica of an animal's hoof. It was dirty-brown with dried blood.

"But there *was* a horse!" a voice cried. "I saw it the night Winslow's nurse was killed!"

It was Dan Colter. He had arrived with some of the townspeople.

"Right," Stark said. "But Winslow used the horse only once. The night Miss Burke was killed! It must be hidden quite close. Come on!"

He pushed through the mass of bushes. A faint path wound through the trees to a rather large clearing. Detectives had examined the clearing before, but Stark gave it a long, through inspection.

It took nearly half an hour of patient scrutiny before he found the answer. A long vine trailed from one of the oaks. Stark ripped the green leaves away. Inside, cunningly woven upward through the heart of that dangling vine, was a thin wire.

Stark jerked it. There was a faint underground throb. His staring men cried out with amazement. A square section of the turf was rising! A weed-covered door slanted rigidly upward and remained open.

A ramp led downward into a concealed earth chamber. Stark and a few of his men went down the ramp. The moment the last man stepped to the earth floor, there was a faint click. The overhead door closed of its own volition.

"That's so the horse would stay put when it returned here," Stark said tonelessly. "And there's your 'pale horse of Death', gentlemen—the one that Winslow stole from the farm of Abner Bishop!"

The horse stood quietly in a corner, its nose nuzzled into a pail of oats. When it saw the strangers it shied, but its shifting feet made no sound. Each of its four hoofs was wrapped tightly in a gray, deadening material. Even at a gallop the sound would be muffled and mysterious. And on ordinary hard ground there would be no indentations from the well-padded shoes.

On a table in an opposite corner were some interesting objects. There was a corked bottle filled with a colorless liquid. A tiny portable phonograph was alongside it. And there were objects even more gruesome—the severed hands and feet of a skeleton. Rubber clamps were attached to the bony wrists and ankles.

"Part of Winslow's costume," Stark said. "All he had to do was to allow them to show beneath the hem and sleeves of his black cloak. Together with that remarkable plastic mask strapped over his own head, it was enough to frighten young Colter out of his wits."

Stark uncorked the bottle and sniffed it. The smell of decay made everyone shudder.

"It was easy for a doctor to concoct this grisly mixture," Stark said. "We'll know exactly what chemicals Winslow used when the coroner analyzes the stuff. As for this tiny phonograph—listen!"

He turned the spring, and the record on the turntable began to whirl. Into the silence of the underground chamber came the eerie sound of the Death Beast—the rapid gallop of hoofs that died into nothingness when Stark lifted the needle.

"The crimes," Stark said, "were based on shrewd psychology. Winslow himself built up the picture of galloping hoofs before he committed his first murder. He spoke about it to the other doctors. He spoke to Miss Burke. Finally, after preparing the mind of young Colter, he worked his 'miracle' of a ghost horse galloping through the hospital corridor. Tell me, Colter, was there a ventilator grille in that reception room where you heard the hoofs?"

"Yes. There was!"

"Winslow had the portable phonograph concealed in the grille. A wire the same color of the wall would be invisible. It enabled Winslow to start and stop the record with a jerk of his hand. The grille threw the sound into the reception room—which is why the nurse on duty at the far end of the corridor heard nothing."

"But—"

"Some things I can only guess at," Stark said somberly, "but the general pattern of crime is plain. The first killing must have happened like this."

His listeners shuddered at the picture he drew.

"Winslow, having encouraged young Colter to follow him and also Miss Burke, made some excuse to the nurse. He went back by the path, probably on the pretext of telling Colter to go home and stop worrying. But Winslow went only part way back. He hid in the bushes—where his horse and ghost paraphernalia were waiting. He allowed Colter to pass him. Then he mounted the horse and rode out of sight past the terrified Colter. A quick spring —and the hoof-tipped sledge hammer killed the terrified nurse. A slap on the rump sent the trained animal through the woods to the underground chamber where we are now. The horse went down the ramp to get to his pail of oats—and a mechanical tripper dropped the inclined door. That was the only time *Winslow actually needed the horse.* Having shown it to Colter—and leaving no hoofprints to trail it—Winslow needed only the *sound* of the horse for the rest of his crimes."

Stark continued.

"Winslow sneaked to the hospital

reception room later that night. He recovered his phonograph from the grille and brought it here. He was ready for the murder of Judge Rankin. And this time *he built an alibi!* I've been to the house where Winslow performed his operation. There was only one clock there. It was in the sick man's room. Winslow undoubtedly pushed the hands forward while the man's wife was out of the room, getting hot water perhaps. At a quarter of eight he drew her attention to the time. He made her remember it by his dramatic cry: *'This man will live!'* Then, getting rid of her again, he put the hands back where they belonged.

"The woman would never notice the clock trick. Her mind was too upset by the sickness of her husband. Winslow hurried to the woods, got there before Judge Rankin and me. Rankin must have suspected Winslow; that's why he insisted on searching the woods. And Winslow caught him alone and killed him with the sledge hammer. He used the portable phonograph to let me hear the brief sound of hoofs. Then he sneaked here and hid. He got away safely while we were busy dislodging the boulder. Winslow rode home in my car and allowed me to persuade him to leave town."

Stark's voice hardened.

"Actually that trip out of town was a fake. Winslow returned secretly. He feared Sid Jameson suspected him, and dreaded the thought of blackmail. He knew Jameson would visit the woods to try to get evidence. So Winslow went to the riding academy and made his phone call, telling me he had saved another life—and setting the scene for the death of Jameson. Unfortunately for the hostler, he saw Winslow—and the doctor stabbed him to the heart!

"Winslow then raced into the woods. He killed Jameson with a blow of the sledge hammer when the crooked riding master began to search the spot where Judge Rankin had died. Then Winslow waited for me—for he knew that phone call of his would bring me. The rest you know.

There was stunned silence. It was broken finally by Charlie Stark's deputy.

"One thing I don't get, chief. How did you figure the killer was the doctor?"

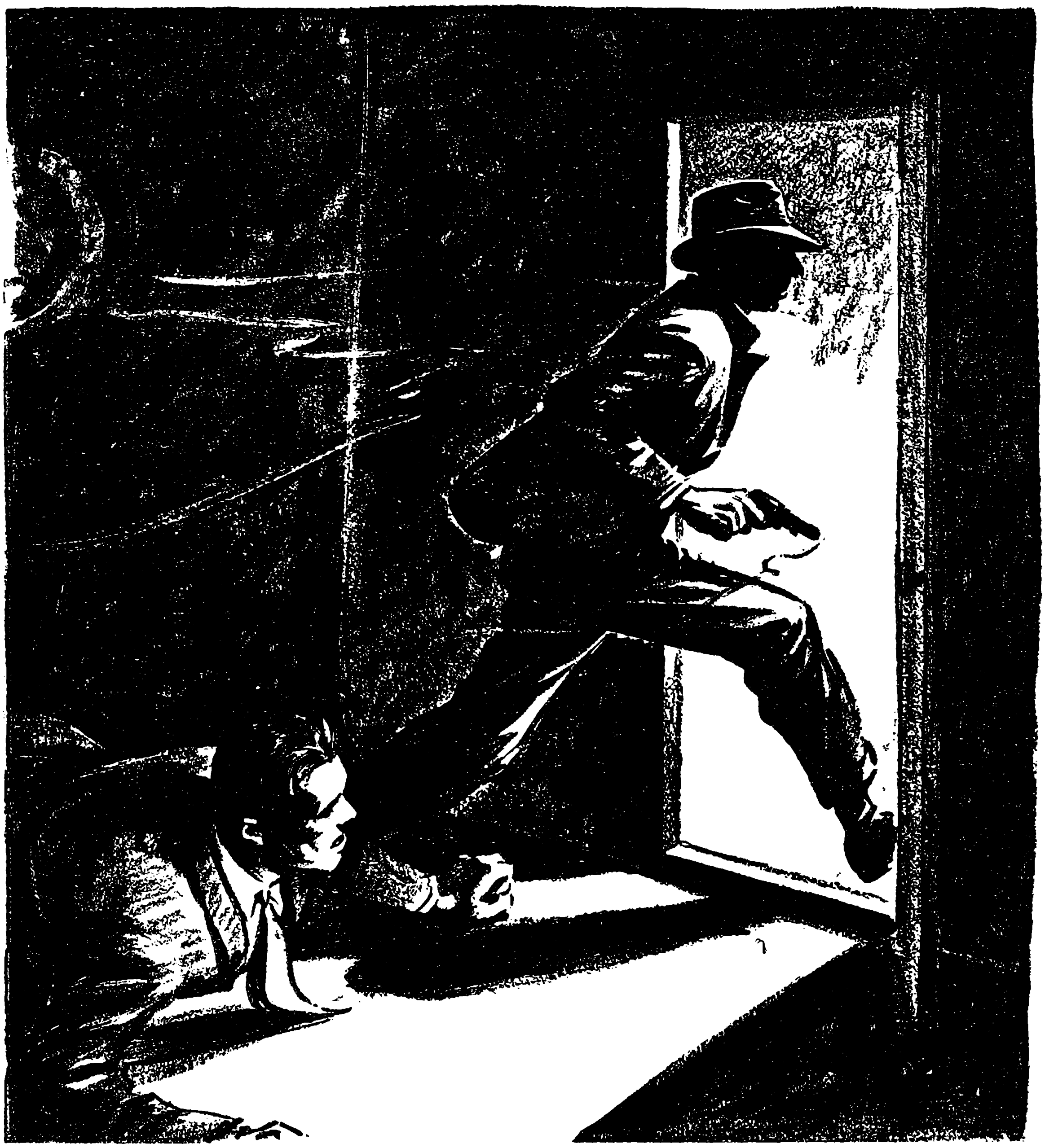
"Winslow gave himself away when he dropped that vulcanized rubber object in the riding academy during his struggle with the hostler. It was the chipped end of a stethoscope—a thing that only a physician would carry in his pocket. A layman would have no possible use for it. It had fallen from the doctor's pocket—probably put there when he had first chipped it, and then forgotten. The killer was neither a riding master, nor a farmer—but a physician. A man who was not even under suspicion. It could have been no one except the sly and hypocritical Dr. Winslow."

There was an uneasy stir in the underground chamber. Men were anxious to get out into the clean air. Charlie Stark lifted the door and led the way up the ramp. He walked to where the stiffening body of Dr. Winslow lay.

There was grim irony in Stark's words when he spoke finally.

"Remember what Winslow kept saying all through this murder maze? His own cunning words have come true! He had everything figured out. But he forgot one thing: *'You can't cheat Death!'*"

THE END.



Cy English makes a tricky guy go for his gun in a

MILLION-DOLLAR MURDER

by NED O'DOHERTY

CHAPTER I.

TRUNK MURDER.

With strict neutrality laws tying up most of our big American liners, you'd imagine the customs agency business would be shot to hell. Instead it was just the other way round. I admit the war had reduced smuggling to a minimum, but there were plenty of other angles for us agents to cover. There were passports to be checked, spies to be watched for, and a thousand and one other things. Sabotage of vessels and piers was what we feared most.

When a foreign liner did manage to sneak through the sub-infested waters and dock in New York, a group of agents would be hustled to the pier to mingle with the passengers and keep their eyes open during the examination. Anything could happen, and what got on a fellow's nerves was the fact that he never knew what to expect.

Well, the *Queen* got through safely. We got word that she would slip into her North River pier at eight p. m. I was on tap at seven, and the ship was late and didn't dock till midnight. That was five hours of hanging around a cold pier and almost going nuts from the inactivity. And now three hours more of baggage examination stared me in the face. It had me in bad humor. I hoped something would break, just so a guy could let off a little pent-up steam.

Nothing broke. The examination went through without even a single dame trying to smuggle a fur coat. Once I spotted Leo Sharkey circulating around, and although he had been on our smuggling-suspect list for some time, I didn't bother him now. Who, I thought, would want to smuggle things with a war going on?

Soon most of the passengers had cleared customs and only a few stragglers remained. I made my last lap up and down the practically deserted pier and headed for the gate and home.

"Cy! Cy English!" a voice yelled. I didn't turn. I simply quickened my pace before some friendly earbender caught up with me.

It came again. There was something in the tone, a bit persistent, strained, maybe—or frightened. I swung round.

It was a customs guard. He was over on the north side of the pier, leaning on what must have been an unclaimed trunk. His mouth hung loosely open and his eyes were too wide for naturalness. He didn't call again. He just waved for me to come over. I went, mumbling things under my breath that weren't complimentary.

"What's eating you, Kelly?" I demanded.

He blinked at me and his lips moved, but nothing came forth. I grabbed hold of his arm and shook him roughly. "You gone punchy, Kell? Why did you call me?"

He jabbed his index finger up and down toward the floor. I looked down and got the answer to his fright. There was thick crimson liquid on the floor. A lot of it. It had seeped through a crack in the trunk to form a sticky pool.

The trunk was of the steamer type. I snapped back the brass catches and banged the lock with my fist. It wasn't locked, and flew open. I took hold of one side and motioned for Kelly to do likewise. We pulled, and the trunk came open in book fashion. The drawers which should have been on one side had been removed to increase the space inside.

The space was occupied by the body of a man! He fell out on the floor at my feet and rolled over on his back.

Kelly said, "Ugh!" He was sick then and there. I couldn't blame him, for I had all I could do to hold down my own dinner. Murder is bad—but this was far worse than murder. It was a horrible, gruesome sight. Only an inhuman fiend could have done such a thing.

The man's nose had been cut off and his head shaved so that not a single hair remained. The lips had been hacked away and all teeth yanked from the gums; the ears had been amputated, as had every toe from the unstockinged feet.

The answer to this atrocity was plain enough. The killer had made certain that no possible means of identification should remain on the body. I yelled at Kelly:

"Get Steve Phillips, superintendent of the line. Fast, man! You'll find him in the front office."

While he was gone, I gave the trunk a quick once-over and saw that the name-paster had been removed, perhaps by a razor blade. Then Phillips came running down the pier and came up short beside the body. He took one look and had trouble keeping his eyes in their sockets. Then he swung round and started back up the pier. I reached out, gathered up his coat collar, and yanked him back.

This Phillips person looked like an oversized beer barrel with a pig's head stuck on top. The eyes, too, were piglike, hidden as they were in folds of fat. The man was all fat, the loose dripping kind that flowed over his collar and spread out into a body that was all mush. I didn't like the man personally, nor did I like his reputation. He was a chiseler who had been suspected of pulling a few fast ones on the customs, but had always managed to slip out, leaving someone else to take the rap.

I said, "You don't call the cops, Phillips—not yet, not till I say so. The body was found inside the customs barrier, so it's government business. What you do now is look at that trunk and tell me who owned it and where it came from."

Phillips groaned, and a lot of jelly fat did a snake dance. "But, English, look—if those news-hounds get hold of this it will ruin the company's business. I gotta get it off the pier."

I slapped him one on the back of his fat neck. "You do nothing only what I tell you. Once-over that trunk!"

The little pig eyes flashed in a way I didn't like, and I was about to poke him a real one, but he spoiled it by obeying. His head went into the trunk, then out and around it, and finally he turned it on its side. He pointed to a small square of white paper that was pasted there. The Number 208-B was stamped on the paper.

"That is the stateroom where the trunk came from. The company puts on the numbers to avoid loss of baggage."

"Good," I said. "Now look, fatty, send some flunky to check the passenger list and find out who occupied 208-B. While that's being done, you and I'll go aboard and have a look at the room."

We went aboard, turned into a passageway on B deck, and traveled its length to 208-B. Phillips fumbled with a bunch of keys, and I tried the knob. It turned and I went in, snapping on the light switch in the wall.

It was a neat suite with a bathroom adjoining, and everything seemed in perfect order. If the killer had done his cutting up in here, he certainly had done an excellent clean-up job after. I pulled out empty dresser drawers, poked around under the bed, even pulled up the rug. In the bathroom I inspected the washbasin, the tub and bowl, and didn't find a hair nor a single drop of blood. I couldn't understand it. A terrible murder undoubtedly had been done in here, and I'd expected to find a gory mess. Instead, the place was spotless, immaculate—at least so far as the naked eye could discern.

The trunk had come from this room, so it was natural to assume that the murder had been done here and the body packed in the trunk. I wondered why the body hadn't been thrown into the sea, but the answer to that seemed to be that the murder had happened shortly before the ship docked, when the decks would be crowded with passengers. As I left the bathroom, Phillips' assistant came in looking very pale. Behind him trailed Ben Williams, deputy surveyor in charge of the baggage examination, and the ship's inspector.

I asked Phillips' assistant if he'd checked the passenger list, and he nodded, and Ben Williams said:

"I checked it with him, Cy, and I must say you've sure run into something here. If this thing isn't solved in a hurry, it's liable to add up into a swell international complication. The man who occupied this suite, the man you found murdered in that trunk, was Stanley Manacher. Manacher was an attaché to an embassy of a foreign government whose relations with the United States already are strained. True, Manacher's position was a minor one, but he was in possession of a diplomatic passport, and in times like these—well, anything might result."

"That makes it grave," I told Williams. "But what makes you so certain that this mess is all in my lap? I only happened to be around."

Williams grinned. "I know, Cy. But the situation was so serious I got in touch with your chief immediately. He said that you were here and that you were one of the best men he had. He wants you to go right to work on the case."

"That's swell," I snapped, and fell heavily into a chair. It was late, and I was all in. I thought of my warm bed at home and cursed hell out of Kelly for having called me back.

CHAPTER II.

MR. ERIC BOSCH.

Williams was right, however. This was no ordinary case that could be played with. It would have to be solved in a hurry, and a satisfactory explanation made ready for the murdered man's government. And up till now I hadn't a single concrete clue to start on.

Steve Phillips was moping around with his head cocked on one side and his fat lips all twisted up. He disappeared into the bathroom and came out after a while, still looking thoughtful. I said:

"What's eating your gray matter?"

He snapped out of it in a hurry. "Oh, nothing, Mr. English. Not a thing."

Maybe not, but the guy struck me as having something on his mind. I couldn't figure what, so I forgot it, and took another look around the room. I didn't find a thing, and then it suddenly struck me that a killer who would go to all the trouble to remove all means of identification from a body certainly wouldn't leave clues lying around a room. A smart murderer. Too damn smart, perhaps. It reminded me that Uncle Sam had a scientific bureau in Washington specifically for dealing with smart guys.

I went to the customs office on the pier and put through a long-distance call. I gave the fellow in the bureau a quick idea of what had happened, and asked if he could help. He didn't waste any time.

"Sure can, Mr. English," he said.

"I'll send one of our best men up there. The plane will get him to New York first thing in the morning."

He hung up, and I whistled at what sure was fast action. I went back aboard ship, turned into the passageway, and walked down toward 208-B. As I came abreast of Stateroom 201, I thought I heard a slight sound on the other side of the door. It didn't mean much, except that all staterooms were supposed to be vacated. I listened, heard nothing more, and figured I'd been mistaken. I started to move on, but something stopped me. I put my ear against the door. No dice. Still I was certain I had heard something that first time.

I tried the knob and it turned, and I pushed the door in on a lot of blackness. I stepped inside and felt around for the light switch. The man must have been hiding behind the door. He kicked it closed and a gun spat fire in my face. Luckily I had jumped back at the sound of the banging door.

The slug ate skin from my cheek. I swore, and dived in the direction of the flash. I'm a big lug, and I used to push leather for a living before entering the service, but bigness and boxing knowledge usually aren't of much advantage in a dark room, especially when there's a rod trying to jab lead into your face.

I flung against a soft body and felt hot breath hiss down my neck. I threw an uppercut in the general direction of the hiss, but that rod interfered. It caught me a neat one on the side of the head, and my knees suddenly had hinges that worked both ways. I felt this fellow brush past me and managed to heave an overhand right after him. It must have annoyed him, for he swung round and tried one himself that put me back on my heels.

I stepped in fast, got two straight lefts to the guy's face, and followed through with a right cross. He made noise bouncing off the floor. I leaned forward to gather him up, and when I was real close—he fired. The slug sizzled across the top of my skull and sent numbness shooting down my spine. It dropped me flat on my face. My brain continued to function dully, but my body was plain dead bulk.

I was a sucker for the payoff slug, but I guess he was in too great a hurry. He yanked open the door and was silhouetted there for a brief second. Then he was gone, banging the door, but in that flashing second I had seen enough of that hawklike face to recognize it as belonging to Leo Sharkey.

Then I was in hell, with flames all about, and it was very hot indeed and I tramped around, looking for that Sharkey rat. I held a pitchfork, which I intended to use on Sharkey. I searched and searched and the sweat poured from every part of my body, but there was no Sharkey. I did see a lot of guys who seemed familiar, but the Sharkey punk wasn't among them.

Something cold splashed against my face and ran down. More cold stuff caused me to blink and open my eyes. I wasn't in hell at all; I still was there on the floor where Sharkey had flattened me. One white-coated steward methodically threw water into my face while another did a job on my creased skull. Steve Phillips stood by, pretending to be sorry. I flung off the stewards and got to my feet.

I thought I saw a smirk on Phillips' blubbery face and had all I could do to keep my hands off the buttertub. He said:

"I'm glad you're all right, Mr. English. I wanted to tell you the police are on the pier and they want your permission to move the body to the morgue."

"Let 'em take it," I snapped. "But tell them there'll be a government man around in the morning to give it a thorough examination."

Phillips went out, and I stood in the center of the room and looked around. Leo Sharkey had been only a visitor on the pier, and I tried to imagine what could have been so important as to have him snooping around the ship's staterooms.

I opened the bathroom door and looked inside. Three trunks stood lined against the wall. This was odd, because all baggage should have been landed long before now. I opened the trunks and found them empty. Wonder if these were what Sharkey had been interested in? I sat down on the side of the bathtub and tried to think. With all the pounding in my head it was no go.

I went out, hunted up the chief steward, and asked who had occupied Stateroom 201-B. He found a list and read off the name—John Sanders. He said Sanders was a short, thin guy, about fifty years of age, who had a nervous habit of blinking his eyes. That's all the steward could tell me, and he proved it by yawning in my face.

I put my palm against his open mouth and shoved him back into his room. The name Sanders didn't mean a thing, and the vague description meant less. The blinking business might add up to something, but I was too all-in to think about it at the moment. Sleep was what I needed.

I got home, took a hot shower, and fell into bed. It seemed a minute later that the phone rang. I tried to ignore the noise, but no could do. I opened one peeper, saw that it was eleven a. m., and bounced out of bed. I barked "Hello" into the mouthpiece and a man said:

"I'm downstairs in the lobby, Mr. English. It is imperative that I speak with you immediately."

"Who are you?" I demanded. "And what's this imperative business?"

"I am Eric Bosch," said the voice, with a faint foreign accent. "And my business is about the murder of Stanley Manacher."

I opened the door on a dark little guy who carried a brief case and an air of self-importance. He strutted across the floor, seated himself on the edge of a chair, and stared at me through glasses which had the thickest lenses I'd ever seen. His hair was very black, his nose hooked, and his lips were a thin, bloodless line. I figured him to be about thirty-five.

"I," he said, "like the unfortunate Manacher, am one of the representatives of my government in this country. Immediately we learned of the horrible murder of our countryman I was ordered to New York to investigate. I planed in from Washington early this morning. Your custom house informed me that you were handling the case, Mr. English. Now, tell me please, just how far you have progressed."

"How did you learn of the murder, Mr. Bosch?" I asked.

He smiled thinly. "That is our business, sir. You have a clue to the murderer?"

I shook my head. "Not a damn thing, Bosch. I must have time."

"Time!" He was on his feet. "There is no time to spare in such a case. Must humble Eric Bosch come to the assistance of the famous Cy English?"

I nodded at the little punk. "Anything you know might help."

"Very well; then there is this: While the *Queen* was yet at sea we received a wireless from Stanley Manacher. An attempt had been made to steal his diplomatic passport, by one whom he suspected of being a spy. We feel that this same man later must have killed Manacher in order to get the passport which would permit him unquestioned entry into the United States."

"You know the name of this person?" I asked.

Bosch walked to the door. He turned with his hand on the knob. "I expect action of you Mr. English. I shall be at the Hotel Prince, when you have something to report. The name of the man is John Sanders." He went out, banging the door behind him.

CHAPTER III.

THE SITTING DEAD MAN.

I fell into a chair and lit a cigarette. A diplomatic passport meant only one thing to me—that whoever possessed one was entitled to free entry of his baggage. It was courtesy extended to all foreign officials, exempting them from the usual examination of their things by the customs inspectors. And Sanders had attempted to steal it, and when he failed, he had murdered Stanley Manacher. Murdered him, because with such a passport he could bring into the United States any amount of contraband!

John Sanders! A thin little guy who blinked nervously, the steward had said. A thin little guy who—I jumped to my feet. I knew such a person. But his name wasn't John Sanders. It was Lew Pollok—and for years he had been Leo Sharkey's partner!

A damn smart scheme, but I thought I saw it all now. With the excitement of war, Sharkey had seen an excellent opportunity to run in a load of contraband, knowing that the customs agents would have their minds filled with things other than smuggling. I figured Sharkey had plunged heavily and he had not intended to be tripped up. So he'd had the bright idea of using a diplomatic passport. Pollok had been sent to Europe to buy up the contraband and to return to the States on a ship that would also carry as a passenger a foreign official. The order had been to be in possession of a free-entry passport before the ship docked in New York.

All this was logical reasoning, except for one or two things. The horrible mutilation of Manacher's body was one thing to which I didn't have any answer; the fact that I had caught Sharkey snooping around Pollok's stateroom, long after the contraband must have been landed, was something else that needed explaining.

One thing was certain—simply picking up Sharkey and Pollok on a lot of theoretical ideas would not be sufficient. Whatever had been smuggled in, I would first have to get my hands on it, before I'd have proof to back up my actions.

I grabbed my hat and headed for the door. Up till recently I knew that Leo Sharkey had maintained a flat in the Willard Apartments. So far as he knew, he wasn't suspected of anything, so it was improbable that he would have taken a powder. I rode a cab to the Willard place, and had no trouble finding my meat's name in the hall directory.

I took the automatic elevator to the fifth and started down a corridor in the direction of 502. I heard an explosion. It was muffled and seemed far away, but it was sufficient to stop me dead in my tracks. It might have been a shot or a car backfiring in the street below. I thought I could recognize the sound of a shot, but I must have been mistaken.

I continued down the hall and stopped outside the door of 502. No sound came from within. On a chance, I tried the knob before knocking. It turned, and I went in and closed the door silently behind me. The blinds must have been down, because there was a light on in the room at the end of the small hall in which I stood.

It was too quiet in here, unnaturally so. Something like a drop of ice water ran down my spine. I didn't like it. These queer feelings usually added up to something. I unholstered my automatic and moved toward the room on the balls of my feet. Just inside the room I stopped and put the automatic back where it belonged. There was no need for gun or quietness here, because you couldn't bother a dead man. And Leo Sharkey was very dead.

He sat slumped in an easy-chair over on the other side of the room. There was an ugly wound where his left eye should have been, and thick gore rolled down his cheek and dropped off onto his white shirt-front.

There was a closed door to my left which I figured opened into the bedroom. I started toward it, changed my mind, and moved across the room to where the dead man sat.

Something stopped me. I don't know what. All I know is that the short hairs on the back of my neck began acting up. Was I losing my nerve? No, it wasn't that. It was something—

I started to turn around. There was a click, and the room was plunged into darkness. I dropped to the floor, calling myself every kind of a damn fool for not having looked into the bedroom. Thunder mingled with lightning, and three slugs snapped at space where a moment before my body had been.

I was up and flinging myself toward the gun artist. He fired again, a wild one, then my body struck his and we went to the floor like a ton of brick.

Whoever this guy was, I could feel that there was plenty of him. He sliced at my head with the gun, and I grabbed his wrist and held it while I banged my free mitt into his face. He groaned, and seemed to be passing out from the punishment. I got to my feet and dragged what was plenty of weight up with me. I held him with my left, leaned back, and put everything I had behind an overhand right. It landed on the button. It send him crashing against the wall, but he didn't go down. Instead he fired again and before he could repeat, I had my own rod and was pumping lead in the direction of the flash.

There was a groan and the sound of a body striking the floor. I went to the wall, held my gun ready, and touched the light switch.

The man on the floor didn't move. I went over and picked up his gun. His shirt-front was stained crimson where my bullets had eaten into his chest, but he was still breathing. I pulled him to a sitting position and braced his back against the wall. He opened his eyes and gave me a sickly grin. It was Steve Phillips, the fat pier superintendent.

"Guess you win, English," he said. "And maybe it's better that way."

"You knocked off Sharkey?"

He nodded.

"Why?" I asked him.

He motioned at a decanter of whiskey that stood on a table. I brought it over and he had a good rap out of it, and a little color came back into his face.

“The punk double-crossed me,” he said. “Grabbing Manacher’s passport and using it to run in a million dollars’ worth of morphine was my idea. I’d invested every dime I owned in the scheme. Lew Pollok had to knock off that dopey foreigner to get his passport, though. Too bad about that, because I didn’t figure on murder.”

“Where’s the stuff now?” I snapped. “Speak up man, you haven’t much time—”

“Not much time,” Phillips repeated, and he coughed, and thick red liquid burst from between his lips and ran down his chin. “Can’t tell you where the stuff is, English. Sorry. Told you Sharkey crossed me up. Damn liar claimed he never got the junk. I feel tired, English. Go way and let me be. Don’t like you, anyway. Too smart.”

Phillips’ head fell forward on his chest. I took hold of his shoulders and shook him roughly. He opened his eyes, and there was death in them now. He smiled again, a ghastly thing.

“Guess you wanna get that junk to save all the school kids in the country from going on the hop. Big hero you are, English. Big rotten bum who couldn’t keep his nose out of things. Look for Lew Pollok. Sharkey must have shipped him off some*where with a million dollars’ worth* of morphine. Dirty double-crossers. Dirty—”

Phillips let out a long breath and died. I straightened, and took sweat from my forehead with the back of my hand. Sharkey still sat huddled in his chair, looking with unseeing eyes on the scene before him.

I felt very disgusted and disillusioned. All my sweet ideas had crumbled to dust at my feet. I was right back where I’d started. Nowhere! Sharkey and Phillips were dead. A million dollars’ worth of morphine was around somewhere, waiting to be peddled to thousands of unfortunates. I, Cy English, was one lousy customs agent, I thought. I wished I had stuck to the pug-ugly business. I wished I were a thousand miles away. I grabbed up my hat and went out, closing the door behind me.

I put the key in the door of my flat and walked into my sitting room. All the lights were on. A shrimp of a guy was holding down my favorite chair, had his heels atop a polished table, and was puffing contentedly on one of my special cigars. He grinned, waved his arm, and said, “Good evening.”

He was about five four, had narrow sloping shoulders, no chest, and a neck like a toothpick. His head was small, round and hairless, and his nose seemed a foot long. When he grinned, the rest of his face moved back and put wrinkles in his bald pate. I said:

“Who the hell are you? And who let you in here?”

He flung that grin at me again. Any moment now, I’d be knocking it off his face.

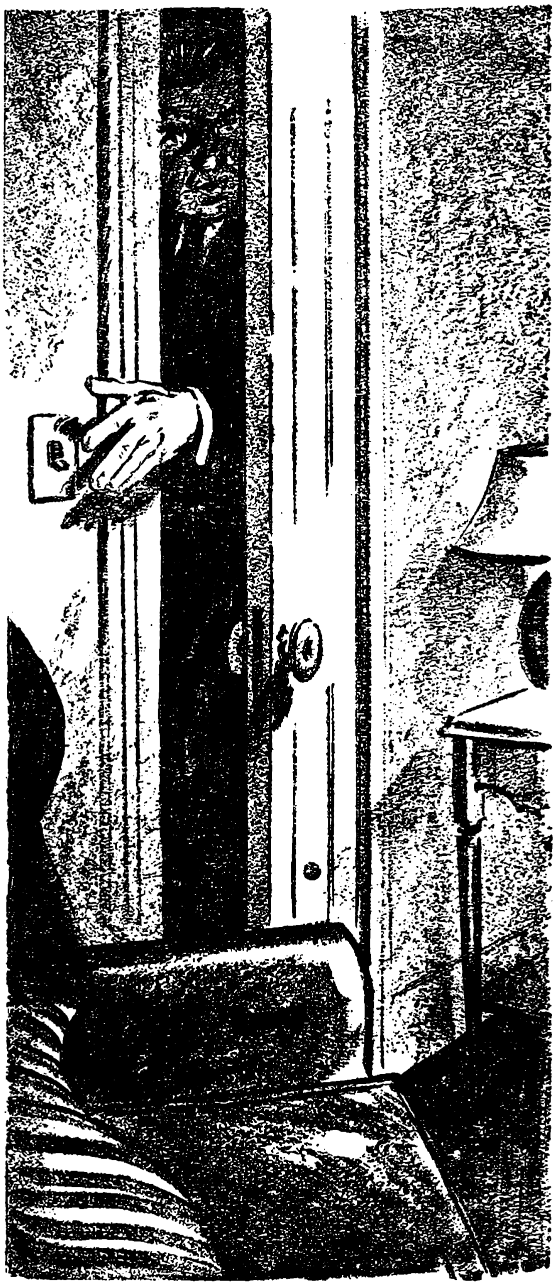
“You should lock your windows,” he said. “I got tired waiting in the hall, so I went up on the roof and *down the fire escape.* Your cigars are good, but I’ve smoked better.”

I came at him with my fists balled. “Who are you, mug—for the last time?”

“Me? I’m Collins.”

“Collins who?”

“Just Collins. From the bureau,



There was a click—and an instant later the room was plunged in darkness!

in Washington. Remember you called for help, Mr. English?"

"You got one hell of a gall," I snapped. "Busting in here and helping yourself."

He nodded agreeably. "I sure have one hell of a gall, all right."

"How about getting down to business?" I demanded.

He dug into an inside pocket and brought out a sheaf of typed pages. He put glasses on his long nose and began to read. That pan of his went dead serious now.

"I examined the body first. The man was middle-aged, had lived in a large city most of his life, wore size-nine shoe, and had a bunion on the big toe of the right foot."

"You're nuts!" I exploded. "The fellow's toes were cut off so you wouldn't know about any bunions, his face was too slashed up to determine age, and you have no way of telling what kind of a city Manacher lived in."

Collins' brows lifted slightly. "No? But my dear man, although all his teeth had been yanked out, two wisdom teeth remained which had not broken through the gums, so the murderer didn't get them. These teeth lean forward at an angle of forty-five degrees at birth. They go slowly back to a perpendicular position at middle age—and these teeth were perpendicular. The lungs contained deposits of soot, which indicated that the man had lived in a large city. And although the toes were gone to prevent toe prints, I knew there had been a bunion because of the microscopic traces which remained on the great bone of the foot."

I blinked at this little shrimp who looked so dumb. He went on with: "I also visited Stanley Manacher's stateroom aboard the *Queen*. You undoubtedly found the room immaculate. I put a few drops of pyridine on the board under the washstand and applied a reagent known as guaicum. It turned the wetted surface blue, indicating the presence of blood. I then called a plumber and had him obtain some waste from the bowl trap. Into this

I put a drop of Mediger's liquid. It immediately turned a blue-green which indicated the presence of human flesh. You may be sure, English, that the murder occurred in 208-B, and that the amputated members of the body were disposed of in the bathroom."

I gulped and said, "Anything else, Sherlock?"

"Yes." He dug more papers from his pocket and handed them to me. "This is a complete report on Stanley Manacher. You may wish to compare it with what I've already told you. You'll learn that Manacher was in the United States some years back and was involved in an explosion of some sort which left him totally blind. Slowly, his eyesight was restored, and he was returning here to continue where he had left off with his official duties, when the unfortunate incident occurred aboard the *Queen.*"

I glanced through the dope on Manacher, and as I read things began to click in my brain and fall into their proper places. When I'd finished Collins said, "Have a cigar."

I did, then headed for the door. Collins jumped to his feet. "Do I go along? Or do I remain here to enjoy the quiet comfort of your cozy apartment?"

"You come along, baldy. I must report to Eric Bosch."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOURTH KILL.

Bosch opened the door himself and greeted us with a smile. We followed him into the sitting room, and Bosch went behind a desk and stood there, rubbing his palms together.

"So," he said. "You have found the ruthless murderer of Stanley Manacher?"

"It's a long story," I answered.

"Perhaps I'd better begin at the beginning."

I told him of the plot to use Manacher's diplomatic passport to get contraband past the customs, and of the deaths of Leo Sharkey and Phillips. When I finished, Bosch was no longer smiling. He came from behind his desk, clasped his hands behind his back, and made fast laps up and down the room. I moved over beside the desk. Bosch swung to face me.

"English, this is very bad business! You are reputed to be the United States customs' ace investigator. I do not believe you are entitled to be so known. You have accomplished absolutely nothing in this case. Two members of the gang are dead—yes. But the murderer, the man in possession of the contraband, is still at large!"

I slid into the chair behind the desk and picked up the writing pen that lay there. Idly, I used its point to prick holes in the desk blotter. Eric Bosch's eyes were blazing in his head.

"You appear very unconcerned about your failure, Mr. English. I demand that you go out and apprehend this murderer, this Lew Pollok person!"

I dropped the pen, rose and walked up and down the room. I had my hands jammed deep in my pants pockets, and I know my brows were all bunched together. I guess I looked worried. Bosch went back to his desk and fell heavily into the chair. His long fingers drummed nervously on the desk top. His eyes were froglike behind the thick-lensed glasses. There was plenty of fire in them, anger I guess, because of the lousy work I had done.

Collins had been walking aimlessly about the room. He stopped and turned round now, apparently completely disinterested in what was going on. I was watching Eric Bosch. His fingers had stopped drumming, and his long hands lay unmoving on the desk blotter.

Nobody said anything. It was oddly quiet in the room. Collins looked from Bosch to me and back to Bosch. Bosch's fingers were moving slowly across the desk blotter. His eyes remained glued on me. I drew in a deep breath, removed my hands from my pants pockets, and eased them up until I had hold of my coat lapels.

Eric Bosch's fingers stopped moving across the desk blotter.

I waited. My jaws were jammed hard together. The tension in the room was electrifying.

Bosch's right hand streaked to a desk drawer. It reappeared immediately, holding a revolver. My hand had jumped to shoulder holster at about the same time. Our guns roared simultaneously. Bosch must have been nervous. His slug seared harmlessly past my cheek. There was no second chance in this game. My bullet ate a neat hole through his forehead. He slid down in the chair and died.

"Capital, English!" said Collins. "Just goes to prove what our target ranges do for you G-boys."

"Take a look in the bedroom," I told Collins. He did, and was back in a minute, nodding his bald knob vigorously.

"Three trunks in there, English. Packed to the gills with morphine. Be worth a million bucks here in the States. You figured it out that Eric Bosch was in reality Stanley Manacher?"

"Yes, Collins. Your Sherlocking went a great way toward proving that. You found that the murdered man was middle-aged; the report on Manacher said that he was thirty-six. The soot you discovered in the lungs of the dead man showed that he had lived in a large city, while, according to the report, Manacher came from a small town in Europe. On the other hand I knew that Lew Pollok was middle-aged, and he had lived in New York all his life, which would account for the soot. After that, it wasn't difficult to figure that Manacher had murdered Pollok and, by mutilation of the body, attempted to give the impression that Pollok had murdered *him*. It would have been damn clever if it had worked, for it would have had us hunting a man who already was dead. It would have left the real murderer, Manacher, in the clear, with a million dollars' worth of narcotics to soothe his conscience."

"But," said Collins, "Stanley Manacher was an official of a foreign government, in possession of a diplomatic passport. I can't conceive of such a person going into the kill business."

"Manacher held a very minor position. His government is a small one, here today and perhaps gone tomorrow. Manacher's salary was petty, his future not very promising. Pollok tried to steal his passport and was caught. Then he attempted to bribe Manacher to run in the stuff. Manacher suddenly saw a chance to clean up a fortune all for himself. So he murdered Pollok, placed the body in one of his trunks—which he didn't claim on the pier—and packed the morphine in the others.

"He got away clean, but he was worried about Pollok's henchmen. So he figured to use me to clear them from his path—and he almost succeeded. Phillips, of course, murdered Sharkey because he thought he was being double-crossed."

Collins wiggled his ears, drew one of my cigars from his breast pocket, and bit off its end. He lit it, blew smoke at the ceiling, and sighed contentedly. "It adds up nicely, English—except one thing: How did you make the guy go for his gun?"

I grinned, because this was my turn to get back at this clever little bald-head. "Your report said Manacher had once been totally blind. And the bogus Eric Bosch wore thick-lensed glasses. This fact hinted that Bosch and Manacher might be one. But I had to be sure. I figured a man who once was blind must have studied the Braille system. In one of my cases I dealt with spies who used the system to send messages. I learned something about it. So I managed to sit at the desk over there long enough to pen-prick a few words on the desk blotter. Later Manacher sat there, and it was natural that he should feel out the words with his fingertips. It simply said:

"'Eric Bosch is Stanley Manacher.'"

THE END.

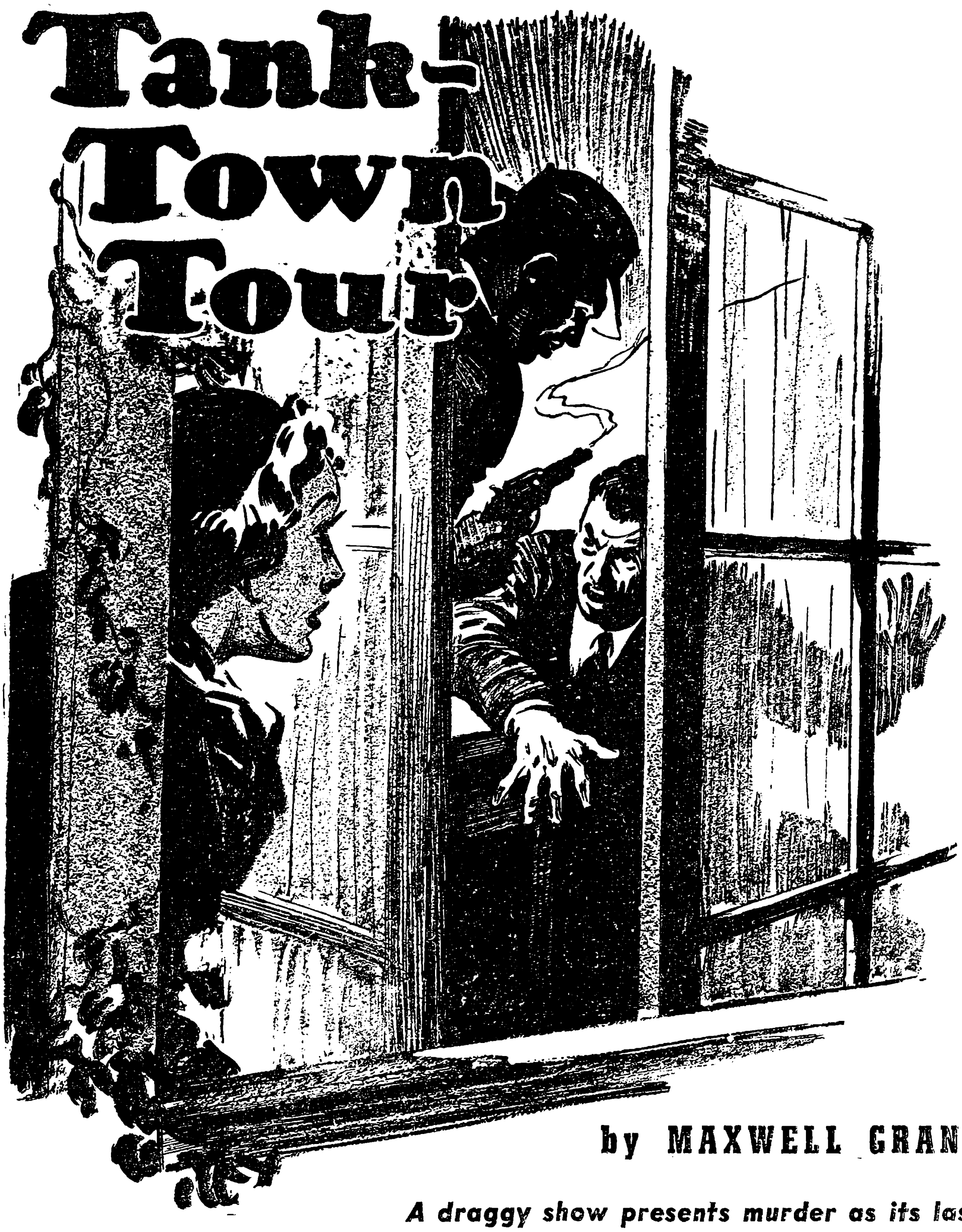
GRIPPING—TENSE—EXCITING

Stories that will hold you to the spot until the very last sentence is read; stories that will leave you with something to think about; stories that will make you want more! You'll find just such yarns, all packed with thrills, action, excitement and mystery, in every issue of Street & Smith's Clues-Detective Stories. Every issue packed to the brim with the best that can be gotten; best stories by best writers. Get your copy at your neighborhood newsstand today!

CLUES-DETECTIVE STORIES

10 Cents a Copy At All Newsstands

Tank-Town Tour



by MAXWELL GRANT

A draggy show presents murder as its last act—and Norgil the magician is starred!

CHAPTER I.

VAUDEVILLE COMES BACK.

They were bringing back vaudeville in Grand Falls; bringing it back in a fashion that threatened to kill and bury it. The show was getting plenty of laughs, but the merriment came before the actors sprang their gags, not after.

Perhaps Heloise was to blame. She opened the show, assisted by Professor Engler, and proved herself capable at nothing except eating fish. All trained seals should do their stunts and accept a fish as a reward;

Heloise happened to be the exception.

Her appetite was ravenous, and the more she ate, the less she cared about the act. Heloise flunked everything except the ball-balancing stunt at the finish. By then, the audience was as fed up as Heloise. When Profesesor Engler finally had the thirty-inch sphere spinning on the end of the trained seal's upturned nose, the audience responded with raspberries instead of applause.

No doubt Professor Engler took himself too seriously, which added to his misfortune. The other turns made the mistake of trying to be funny. The comedy song-and-dance team, the wisecracking monologist, even the contortionist who disported in a monkey suit—all went flat, because they followed Heloise.

It took the feature act to save the bill. The boos that greeted Norgil, the magician turned to silence as his nimble fingers plucked cigarettes from nowhere, vanished them with mere rubs of his hands and found them again in puffs of smoke that he blew from his lips.

Scattered applause arrived, along with bowls of goldfish, huge bouquets of flowers, and a flaming fire bowl that the magician produced from flimsy clothes of silk. When a brimming glass of water traveled up through the crown of an inverted opera hat and Norgil passed both items for inspection, the magician had won his audience.

Then came the illusion that should have been the climax. Introducing his leading lady, Miriam Laymond, Norgil loaded her into a gigantic cannon. Aimed at a square box hanging from the theater dome, the cannon was fired with a huge blast. Hauling the box down by a rope, Norgil and his assistant, Fritz, brought other boxes from within it. Out of the third, and innermost, box of the nest popped Miriam, to take a bow with Norgil, while the handclaps of the audience rocked the rafters. Right then the audience had forgotten everything that went before; but they were due for a reminder.

This was a unit show. The entire cast flooded the stage, as a finale. Dancers, monologist, contortionist, arrived without a mishap. But when Heloise flip-flapped on the stage, tripping her stooge, Professor Engler, the entire spell was shattered. The curtain thudded to the stage as though glad to be released, while the *yahhhs* and catcalls from the audience would have excited envy in the Bronx.

From the rear of the audience, two men in Tuxedos viewed the debacle. One was the theater manager, Ray Comber, a dapper man of lightweight build. His face showed worry as he glanced at his companion, a chunky man, whose eyes stared from under bushy brows, and whose heavy jaw was propped in his hands as he leaned on the rail behind the rear row.

The chunky man was Luke Trevan, former owner of several big-city night clubs. For several months, Trevan had been in the vicinity of Grand Falls, organizing a new theater chain. Anxious to add the Plaza Theater to Trevan's circuit, Comber had hoped that the vaudeville show would please the chunky organizer. Apparently, it hadn't.

Trevan's response was a blunt, harsh query:

"How long has this been going on?"

"For two days," replied Comber. "I'll admit it's a cheap show, Mr. Trevan, but it's packing the house, and they seem to like it."

"I don't," returned Trevan. "I thought I'd learned one thing from the night-club business: that vaudeville was on the way back. But a few corny shows like this will put it on the way out."

"Norgil has a good act—"

"Sure. Good enough to make the rest of the bill look even worse than it is. I'd like to know"—Trevan furrowed his busy brows—"why a real performer like Norgil wants to louse around with such a punk unit. Take me backstage, Comber. I want to meet Norgil."

Norgil wasn't in his dressing room when Trevan and Comber arrived there. The visitors learned that the magician was in with Professeor Engler, trying to solve the unit's major problem—that of improving the trained-seal act. From the comments backstage, both the professor and Heloise had made themselves thoroughly unpopular with the rest of the cast.

The monologist was suggesting that Heloise might do better if fed a different brand of fish. The contortionist opined that if Professor Engler let down his handle-bar mustache, he could double as a walrus and do the stunts that Heloise flunked. But behind such levity was a serious note. The members of the unit saw disaster to their tour unless the Heloise menace could be permanently removed.

When Norgil came from the professor's dressing room, he brought good news. He had told Engler that the show was running too long and that Heloise could work in Norgil's act, instead of doing an individual turn. Norgil intended to produce the seal from a tip-over box for the finale, and the professor would then step on the stage with the big ball, so that Heloise could perform her one sure stunt, the nose balance.

Seeing Comber, Norgil asked the theater manager's approval and received it. Therewith, Comber introduced Norgil to Trevan. The magician had heard of the night-club owner; they shook hands heartily. When Norgil stepped toward his dressing room, Trevan followed. When the rest were out of earshot, Trevan queried:

"What's the lowdown, Norgil? Why did you get booked with this horse opera? Why don't you play the big time?"

Smiling, Norgil stepped past his dressing room, to unlock another door. Trevan noted that the magician's smile was bitter.

"The big time?" Norgil repeated. "Do you know where I can find any, Trevan?"

"There's not much of it left," conceded Trevan, "but you could make spots for yourself, if you had a big act—"

He stopped, as Norgil opened the door. Within was a dressing room stacked to the ceiling with tables, cabinets, and other magical equipment, mostly in an unfinished state. Norgil wheeled out a small, boxlike cabinet which was mounted on a square platform. It was the only piece of apparatus that was painted, but Trevan noted that it needed another coat.

"This will do for Heloise," decided Norgil. "I'll have Fritz touch it up, and after that we can get back to work."

A great light dawned on Trevan.

"You mean you're building a new shop?" he queried. "While you're on the road with the unit?"

"Exactly," replied Norgil, "and the horse opera is covering my expenses. Maybe I'll be ready for your new circuit when it opens, Trevan."

"You won't have long to wait," declared Trevan. "Take a look at next week's *Variety,* when it goes on sale tomorrow. They're giving me a big write-up in the sheet."

As they left the theater together, Comber asked Trevan if he had solved the riddle of Norgil's presence with the unit. Trevan replied that he had.

"A big act is what Norgil needs," affirmed Trevan, "and he's building one. That's the answer, Comber."

Without knowing it, Trevan had propounded another question by his visit back stage. Norgil put it to Fritz while they were measuring Heloise to find out how well she would fit into the tip-over box.

"I wonder," Norgil said in a whimsical tone, "just why a big night-club owner like Luke Trevan is bothering to put a vaudeville circuit into tank towns like Grand Falls. Can you answer that one, Fritz?"

Fritz couldn't, and admitted so. But he could tell from the gleam that went with Norgil's smile that the magician already had the answer. So far, this tour had been a mystery to Fritz, as well as Miriam. Soon, they would learn the reason behind it.

Of one thing, however, Fritz was already sure. The purposes that had brought Norgil and Trevan to Grand Falls were definitely interlocked.

CHAPTER II.

NORGIN STRIKES OIL.

The Plaza Theater was operating on a three-a-day policy, and the matinee drew a good house. The natives of Grand Falls had come to jeer the show, not knowing that Norgil had rearranged the unit after the last show the night before.

Without Heloise as an opener, the show looked good. The boos that greeted the early turns were soon drowned by applause. Tap dancers clicked in merry style; the monologue brought genuine laughs; the monkeyshines of the contortionist really rollicked the audience.

It was building, act by act, and when Norgil showed the class of a real headliner, the audience was more than satisfied. At the finish, when Heloise tumbled unexpectedly from the box which Norgil had shown empty, the crowd went wild.

Quite as surprised as the audience, the balky seal remembered a stunt that she had long refused to perform at Engler's bidding. Heloise clapped her anterior flippers in true pinniped fashion, thus joining the applause. Mounting a pedestal, she obligingly received the big two-colored ball when the professor tossed it on her nose. The huge sphere was still spinning when the curtain dropped.

Dressed for the street, Norgil was holding another chat with Professor Engler when Miriam arrived, bringing a local newspaper.

"Here's the *Star-Dispatch,"* she said. "It has a good story about that luncheon show you did for the Civic Club. But the new number of *Variety* won't be in until five o'clock."

Reading the account in the *Star-Dispatch,* Norgil noted the names of persons he had met at the luncheon. Practically all of the town's leading citizens had been present. Absent, however, was the name of Luke Trevan, just as its owner had been absent from the affair.

Trevan did not belong in Grand Falls. Though he was still stopping at the Cataract Hotel, where the Civic Club met, he had not been invited to the luncheon. Comber had explained, rather reluctantly, that

Trevan would probably be recognized when he purchased the Plaza Theater. But until the deal was completed, Trevan did not rate.

One fact bothered Comber. Some friends of Trevan were in town with him; men with experience in night clubs. Comber was afraid that Trevan was grooming them to manage theaters like the Plaza, in Grand Falls and other towns. Anxious to hold his own job when the change came, Comber was highly pleased because Norgil had improved the show.

Leaving Comber talking with Professor Engler, Norgil slid out through the stage door, beckoning for Fritz and Miriam to follow. They seated themselves in Norgil's wide coupé, and the magician drove around the town, something that he had been doing every day. By way of adding to the mystery, Norgil pulled into a service station, and drove the coupé up an elevated track.

"An oil change," he told the attendant. "Put in Supreme. I've heard it's the best there is."

"You aren't the only one," replied the attendant. "They all think the same about Supreme."

Fritz gave a puzzled look past Miriam.

"Say, boss," said Fritz. "Why all the oil changes? You've had one in every town. What's it all about?"

Norgil caught a smile from Miriam.

"Ask her, Fritz."

"I can't give the whole answer," replied Miriam, with a slow shake of the head. "But there's one thing, Fritz. In every other town, they have knocked Supreme Motor Oil. In Grand Falls, they still seem to like it."

While Fritz was scratching his head, Norgil pointed across the street to a corner building that bore a sign:

AJAX MIXED PAINTS

Half behind the Ajax plant, between it and a machine shop, a large truck was unloading barrels that bore a single word, marked with stenciled letters: "Turpentine."

"Nice-looking barrels," observed Norgil. "Do you think they hold fifty gallons, Fritz?"

Fritz shook his head.

"Not big enough."

"Turpentine usually comes in fifty-gallon lots," remarked Norgil. "It's odd, how much of it the Ajax plant is using, all in those smaller barrels. They look heavy, too, those barrels, as if they had metal drums inside them."

The oil change was finished. Norgil backed the car down the track and drove around the block, passing the machine shop, which looked closed. Heading for the Cataract Hotel, he stopped near a taxicab stand.

"Fritz and I are going to buy some paint," Norgil told Miriam. "We're taking a cab, and I want you to follow and stay across the way, in the coupé. When a fellow with a weasel face comes out of the place, trail him. His name is Claude Gremble; he owns the Ajax Paint Co. If he meets anyone, hurry back to the theater and tell me. Otherwise, stay close to him until it's time for the supper show."

The Ajax Paint Co. had a very tiny office, occupied by a dumb stenographer and a drowsy office boy. Norgil gave his name; he and Fritz were ushered into an office marked "Private" where they met Gremble, the man with the weasel face.

Gremble was really enthusiastic. He had seen Norgil's show at the Civic Club, and regarded this visit as an honor. But Norgil promptly turned it into a business trip, by describing the new show that he was building. It was practically complete, Norgil explained, except for the painting. A lot of paint would be needed, and Norgil hoped that Gremble could sell him some at wholesale.

Though he seemed nervous while Norgil talked, Gremble supplied a weasel smile at the conclusion. He led his visitors into a small stock room, where sealed cans of paint were on the shelves, and invited them to choose the colors that they needed.

"Of course, we have a large supply," remarked Gremble, gesturing toward a locked door. "These are merely samples; the rest is in the storeroom."

Norgil began to order paint in quantities that astounded Fritz. All the while, Gremble nodded, but he seemed as nervous as before. Beckoning them back into his office, he glanced at his watch and found that it was after five o'clock. They went into the outer office, where Gremble spoke to the stenographer.

"Have you the records on Silver Glow?" he queried. Then, turning to Norgil: "That's the color you particularly wanted. We may be short of it at present."

The stenographer didn't have the records. Smilingly, Gremble remembered that he had taken them home. He asked if Norgil could stop out and see him later, to which Norgil agreed. Dismissing his two-person staff, Gremble closed the office and offered to take Norgil and Fritz back to the theater in his car. Indicating the taxicab, Norgil recalled that its meter was still running and decided that he and Fritz had better use it.

Instead of returning to the theater, Norgil had the cab travel around town, much to the driver's enjoyment. The cabby did not know that Norgil had already covered most of Grand Falls in his own car; nor was he surprised when Norgil finally had him stop at the edge of Grandview Park.

Lots of visitors liked to alight at the park and walk through to town, passing the falls on the way. But as soon as the cab departed, Norgil motioned Fritz in the opposite direction. Through gathering dusk, a walk of a few blocks brought them to the deserted machine shop which flanked the Ajax Paint Co.

"Wait here," Norgil told Fritz, "and be ready to signal me if anyone shows up."

With a set of special picks once owned by the famous Houdini, Norgil rapidly entered the machine shop. The place had benches, which bore old lathes and other equipment long in disuse. Shelves revealed boxes, filled with junk, the only items of value consisting of ball bearings, stowed on a corner shelf.

Norgil was working on the theory that the machine shop would not be deserted unless it connected in some way with the paint plant. Looking for a clue, he found it in the shape of shelves, which looked as old as the rest, but which gave themselves away by the bright nails with which they were studded.

Using an old hammer that was lying with some discarded tools, Norgil pried away an upright strip of wood. The result proved better than he expected. The faked shelves, built of old wood, were attached to a door nailed from the other side. Under the hard jolts from Norgil's shoulder, the door gave.

Amid the shriek of rusted hinges, the creak of old wood, Norgil tumbled down some steps into the storeroom of the Ajax plant. His flashlight first showed big doors at the rear; heavily barred, they formed the route to the trucking entrance, where the barrels had been unloaded.

Next, barrels themselves, enough to supply the Ajax Co. for a year, assuming that the contents were turpentine. Swinging the light across the huge room, Norgil saw something else beyond a large expanse of concrete floor.

This inner warehouse was shelved from floor to ceiling, holding thousands of paint cans, ten times the amount that Norgil had seen in Gremble's smaller stock room. One corner was filled with quart cans of Silver Glow, as evidenced by the labels—the very type of paint that Gremble claimed was nearly out of stock!

One can was all that Norgil wanted. Taking it, he went back through the machine shop, wedging the shelved door in place. Reaching the far street, he came upon Fritz, who was on the watch for prowlers. With a nudge, Norgil told his assistant to come along.

They reached the park, where darkness had fully settled. Stopping at a deserted bench, Norgil produced the paint can from beneath his coat. Under the gleam of a park light, he used a knife with a punch blade to jab two holes in the can top. He told Fritz to hold his hands cupped.

Then, into the palms of his astonished assistant, Norgil poured a quantity of thick, smooth fluid—not the aluminum paint that Fritz expected from a can of Silver Glow, but deep green motor oil, that might have been the product of the Supreme refinery.

Norgil had struck oil through his visit to the Ajax Paint Co. He had brought back a sample that represented thousands of gallons of the same stuff, stored in a place where it never belonged!

CHAPTER III.

BOOTLEG METHOD.

Fritz wanted an explanation and deserved one, considering the circumstances. Chucking the oil can off into the bushes, Norgil turned to his assistant.

"Rub that oil into your hands, Fritz," he said. "It will do them good, even though it is cheap stuff."

"Cheap stuff?"

"Old oil from drained crankcases," explained Norgil. "Filtered and reclaimed. They've been shipping it into Grand Falls from everywhere, under the head of turpentine. Then they've put it into quart cans, and sent it out under paint labels."

Norgil was walking toward the theater. Fritz kept beside him, putting eager questions.

"Who's 'they'? Gremble?"

"He's only the front," replied Norgil. "The local man who sold out to the racket. Only one man around here is big enough to be managing this graft. Luke Trevan."

Steadily, Norgil detailed the crooked game. It began with Supreme Motor Oil, one of the finest products on the market. Lately, that brand had not been standing up. Reports in the consumers' bulletins had given it a rap the company couldn't understand, until they bought some of their own oil, at retail, and put it to the test.

"It was bootleg," Norgil told Fritz. "Sold at cut rates to service stations, giving them an extra profit that was trivial compared to the take that the racketeers got from such trade."

Fritz didn't ask how Norgil had learned the story of Supreme's troubles. Norgil had ways of hearing many things through various friends and contacts. More interesting to Fritz was how Norgil had traced the racket to its source in Grand Falls.

"Simple enough," Norgil explained. "Grand Falls was the largest town where there were no complaints about poor grade oil. The Supreme people thought the racket hadn't reached here. I had a hunch that the crooks were using Grand Falls as a base, and didn't want to run risks so close to home."

Fritz could picture the rest. He knew, at last, why Norgil had booked into Grand Falls with a small-time vaudeville unit. It was the best way to see the town, and carrying unfinished apparatus was a bluff for people like Luke Trevan. It had also served to acquaint Norgil with Claude Gremble.

In looking over local industries, Norgil had picked the Ajax Paint Co. as the logical blind for the bootleg oil racket. The plant's hunger for turpentine; large shipments of paint going out, could mean that oil was the real story. Norgil's talk about the new show that he was building had lulled Trevan the night before and Gremble this afternoon.

"The oil goes into cans at the Ajax plant," concluded Norgil, as he and Fritz neared the theater, "and Trevan's men are the truckers. They must get rid of the paint labels before they deliver. The fellows at the other end are supplied with counterfeit Supreme labels, along with the cans of oil.

"We'll go through with the supper show, Fritz, so we won't be suspected. After that, we'll have the police raid the Ajax plant. Those cans of oil, with their paint labels, are evidence enough to convict Gremble. He'll squeal eventually on Trevan, and meanwhile, the racket will be through."

Confident that he had outguessed the crooks, Norgil voiced no concern for Miriam, nor was Fritz worried. The girl had undertaken a very simple task in trailing Gremble, who apparently suspected nothing. The fact that Miriam wasn't back at the theater when Norgil and Fritz arrived there was proof in itself that Gremble had not contacted Trevan.

In fact, Miriam was following what seemed a mere routine as she sat in Norgil's coupé across the street from a pretentious house. The place was Gremble's residence; the paint man had gone directly home after leaving his office. From where she watched, Miriam could see Gremble at a window of his living room, reading the evening newspaper.

Miriam's wrist watch showed nine minutes to seven. The supper show would begin at seven o'clock, but she could wait until then and still have time to reach the theater before Norgil's act went on. Miriam was settling herself for the last stretch when she saw the lights of a car on a street behind Gremble's house.

The lights were extinguished. Watching intently, Miriam saw a creeping man come through the grounds beside the house. He stopped at the door of a sun porch and rapped cautiously. Gremble heard it; he came and unlocked the door.

A streak of light from the living room gave Miriam a momentary view of the stranger's face. The man was Luke Trevan. He kept to the darkness of the porch while Gremble went into the living room and turned off all lights except a corner lamp. By then, Miriam was out of the coupé, which was fortunately shielded by trees. Hurrying across the street, the girl crept to the porch entrance, just as the two men went indoors.

The porch offered Mirian the shelter that it had given Gremble. The French door to the living room had a wide crack, through which she could hear the conversation. The panels were glass, and the curtains on the other side thin enough to allow a hazy view, despite the dimness of the single lamp.

"I thought so," Trevan was saying in a low-pitched growl. "Norgil is wise. That's why he came to your place this afternoon."

"But he didn't see the storeroom," protested Gremble. "I didn't let him in there, Luke."

"He saw enough," retorted Trevan. "That guy knows how to build funny cabinets that fool the eye. One look at the outside of your dump would tell him that he hadn't seen half of what was in it. How long will it take us to clear the place out?"

"At least an hour, Luke, after you get the trucks there. I'll get right down to the office."

"Wait!"

Miriam watched Trevan's dim figure pace the floor; it looked like the mechanical shape of a robot. Finally the racketeer halted, his hulk blotting out sight of Gremble, who was half huddled by a table.

"I'll handle the oil," announced Trevan. "You've got to hold off Norgil. He'll be through his show too soon for us."

"But I can't go to the theater, Luke," protested Gremble. "It would only be a give-away."

"You don't have to go there. Norgil said he would come out here, didn't he?"

"Yes, but he won't come—"

"And both the stenographer and the office boy heard him, didn't they?"

Gremble mouthed another "yes." Trevan guffawed. Miriam saw him pick up an object and hand it to Gremble. She identified the thing as a telephone.

"Call the police chief," ordered Trevan. "Tell him that Norgil tried to blackmail you; that he's on his way here, right now, to threaten you further."

"But how will that help?"

"It will give you a start," explained Trevan. "When Chief Harper gets here and finds you missing, he'll go down and question Norgil, which will give us the time we need. If you have to lam, you'll be on your way; if things blow over, you can come back and say you just ducked out for a while, because of Norgil's threat. They'll believe your word as much as his."

Gremble took the telephone. Miriam heard his call to police headquarters. He put a real quaver into his voice, as he talked to Chief Harper. Gremble's tone was pleading as he urged the chief to come to the house right away. The Norgil threat was imminent, the way Gremble put it.

As Gremble dropped the receiver on the hook, Miriam heard him give a weak, but satisfied chuckle. His figure was visible, as he turned toward Trevan, to ask:

"How did I do, Luke—"

The query ended with a screech from Gremble. The scream, too, was finished in abrupt style, by the muffled blast of a revolver. Amid a whirl of impressions, Miriam couldn't realize what had happened, until she saw Gremble's frail form drop away, strike the table, and crumple to the floor.

In Trevan's big fist was the revolver that had delivered a single bullet to Gremble's heart. No more shots were needed. From the gun muzzle coiled a vanishing curl of smoke that might well have represented Gremble's wraith, bound for the Hereafter.

Murder had disposed of the one man who could talk; murder that would be attributed to Norgil, bringing complete ruin to the magician's well-laid plans!

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH THE CORDON.

Whatever Miriam might have done in those next tense moments were matters to be thought of later. Sheer instinct was more important than any effort to block Trevan's escape. The killer had a gun; the fact that he didn't know of Miriam's presence offered the girl a chance for self-preservation.

Dropping away from the door, Miriam crouched behind an obscure wicker chair and huddled there while Trevan hurriedly crossed the porch on his way out. The girl's hand clutched the leg of a flimsy table, but she realized that the weapon would be useless, unless Trevan discovered her. Even then, her chances of life would have proven slim.

Fortunately, Trevan kept on his way. He was trying to stuff the gun in his coat pocket, but a bundle of paper prevented him. Shifting the gun, he poked it into the pocket on the other side. Still crouched, Miriam listened until she heard the sound of Trevan's departing motor.

Shakily, the girl fled for Norgil's car. She knew that she would have to get away before the police chief arrived; otherwise there would be new complications. Not wanting Norgil's car to be recognized on the main street, Miriam took a roundabout route to the theater. As she lost her way among dead-end streets, she was gripped by the frantic fear that every moment of delay might make the future worse for Norgil.

Miriam's fears seemed realized when she finally reached the theater. Norgil's act had started; he was in the midst of the cigarette routine, while Fritz was setting tables for the tricks to come. It wouldn't do to dash on-stage and shout at either of them. Miriam's only choice was to hurry into costume and speak her piece at the first opportunity.

Wildly discarding her street attire, Miriam was panic-stricken when she heard a heavy rap at the door. She had visions of police, already on hand, to arrest her, along with Norgil and Fritz. Caught between costumes, Miriam was madly searching for a dressing gown that she couldn't find when she heard the voice of Professor Engler beyond the door:

"Hurry, please, Miss Laymond! You're due on-stage in a few minutes!"

Miriam's helpless feeling ended with a sigh. She had forgotten that the professor was serving as call boy, since his act had been blotted from the bill. Stammering that she was almost ready, Miriam scrambled into her scanty ballet costume and came from the dressing room.

The cannon music had started. Pirouetting on the stage, Miriam was loaded into the big gun. Her face away from the audience, she was telling Norgil what had happened—a hard task, considering the loudness of the music.

"Trevan murdered Gremble," voiced Miriam. "He had Gremble call the police, to say you threatened him. Right afterward, Trevan shot him—"

Miriam was sliding down into the cannon as she spoke. Her words were drowned in a blast a hundred times louder than the report she had heard at Gremble's. When Miriam next saw Norgil, he was helping her from the triple trunks.

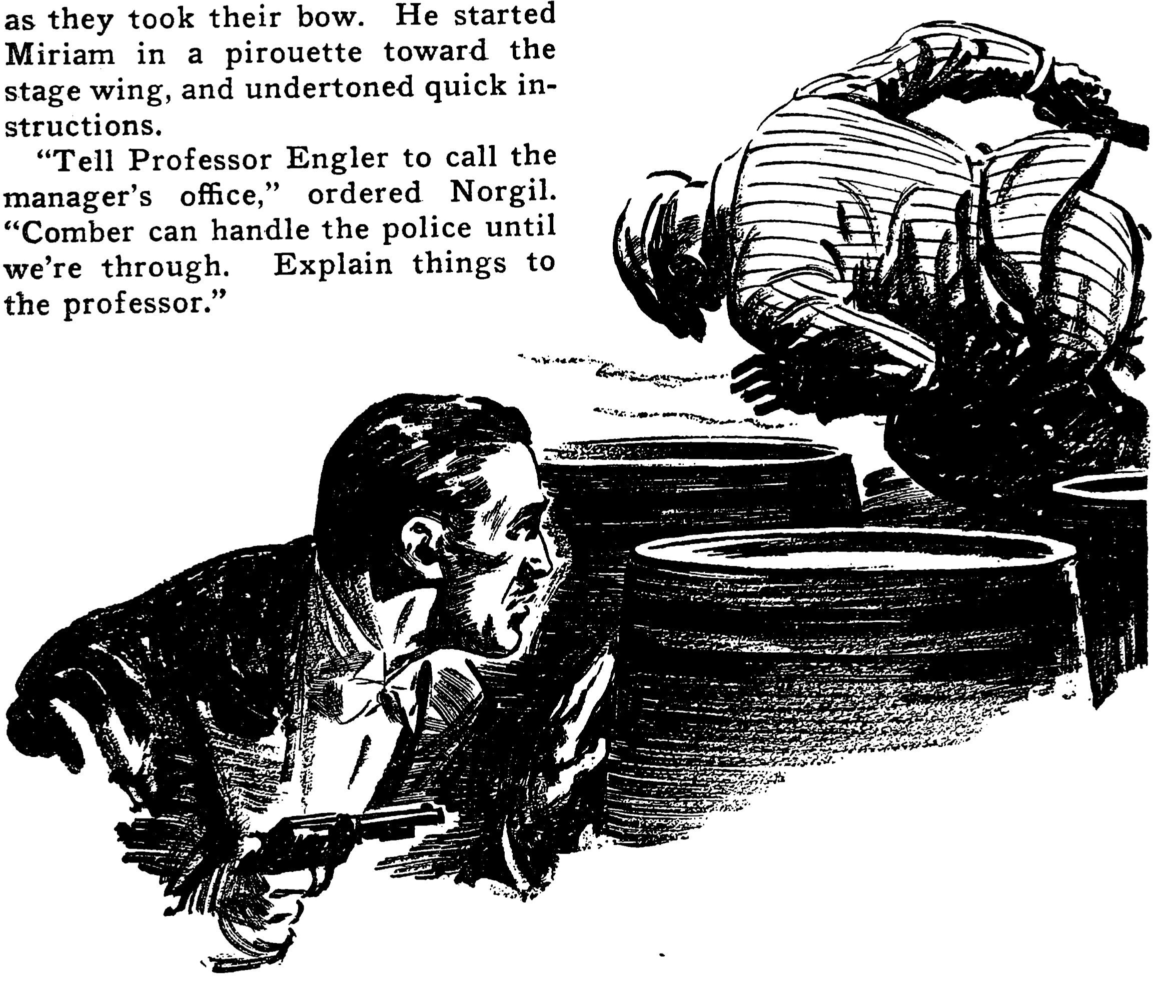
"If the police get here," the girl added, "they'll hold you. It will give Trevan time to clear out Gremble's storeroom. He said he'd have some trucks there—"

Norgil was motioning for silence as they took their bow. He started Miriam in a pirouette toward the stage wing, and undertoned quick instructions.

"Tell Professor Engler to call the manager's office," ordered Norgil. "Comber can handle the police until we're through. Explain things to the professor."

Though poor at handling trained seals, Engler proved himself competent enough at other matters, when Miriam relayed Norgil's instructions. Meanwhile, Norgil and Fritz were busily entertaining the audience by producing Heloise from the empty box. The cue came for the finale; both Miriam and Engler went on-stage, to join the rest of the company.

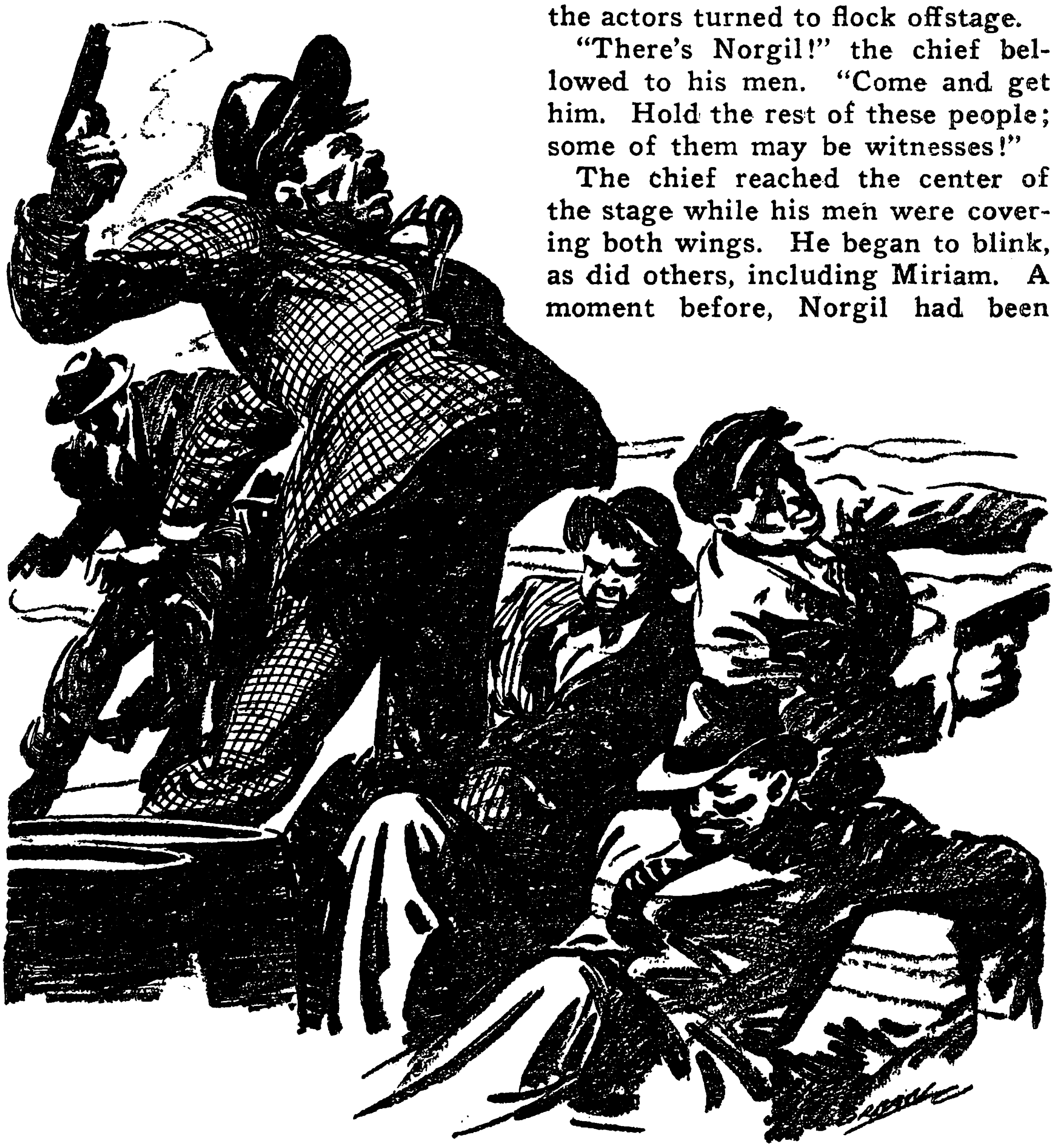
While Engler was stepping to one wing to get the balancing ball, Miriam saw Comber arrive at the other side of the stage. The manager was just in time. Men in blue were invading the stage door, headed by a bulky, red-faced individual,



Norgil was sheltered behind the barrels as the first shots pinged against walls and ceilings!

who was obviously Police Chief Harper.

Miriam was close enough to overhear the arguments that Comber offered the police chief. If they wanted Norgil, they could take him in a very few minutes. He was in plain sight, and still would be, when the curtain fell. But a police invasion at this moment might produce a riot in the theater.



Chief Harper nodded his agreement. He kept watching Norgil, who was turned the other way pointing to Professor Engler. In his turn, the professor was taking bows for Heloise, who was spinning the huge ball on her nose. The curtain fell so suddenly that Chief Harper didn't realize that the show was over until the actors turned to flock offstage.

"There's Norgil!" the chief bellowed to his men. "Come and get him. Hold the rest of these people; some of them may be witnesses!"

The chief reached the center of the stage while his men were covering both wings. He began to blink, as did others, including Miriam. A moment before, Norgil had been among the other actors. Right now, the magician was gone!

Everyone halted at Harper's shout. Striding back and forth across the stage, the police chief eyed the performers; then glanced about at Norgil's paraphernalia, which still decorated the stage.

"Send them to their dressing rooms one by one," the chief told his men. "Keep them there until we've found Norgil. Come on, all of you"—stepping to the wing, Harper gave a sweeping gesture—"and I'll look you over when you go by."

Miriam and the girls went first, while the chief scanned them as though suspecting that Norgil might have donned feminine costume. Stopping Fritz, Harper studied him closely, decided he couldn't be Norgil, and sent him on his way. Next came Professor Engler, smoothing his handle-bar mustache with one hand, while he rolled the balancing ball with the other. Behind him waddled Heloise. The professor paused, and spoke to the chief.

"Don't forget Heloise," Engler advised. Then, with a cackly laugh: "She must be Norgil, in disguise."

"Get along!" snapped the police chief. "You and that pet of yours! I see the fellow I want."

Rolling the ball to the wing, the professor shooed the seal ahead of him, and glanced back to watch the police chief pounce on the contortionist who wore the monkey suit. The baboon's head came away, to disclose a face that wasn't Norgil's. The stage was cleared of performers. The chief gestured to a pair of officers.

"We're going to take this stuff apart." He pointed to Norgil's apparatus. "Norgil is hiding somewhere, right here among us."

Search of the cannon and the triple chests produced no trace of Norgil. The police chief came to the square box from which the magician had brought Heloise. He and his men opened the box—and found it empty.

"Wait, though!" growled the police chief. "Slap it shut again, the way Norgil did, when he brought the seal out of it. Maybe—"

They slammed the box lid. A thud came from inside. Springing upon the little platform, the police chief aimed his revolver, and yanked the box lid upward, with his other hand.

"Out of there, Norgil—"

The onlookers saw Chief Harper stare, then shove away his revolver. Stooping, with arms wide apart, he reached for something that filled the box, and brought the object into sight. It didn't happen to be Norgil.

The article that had so mysteriously arrived from nowhere was a great big rubber ball, the plaything of the trained seal, Heloise!

CHAPTER V.

CROOKS AND CONCRETE.

Chief Harper didn't balance the fancy ball on the end of his stubby nose. Instead, he bounced it across the stage, where it knocked over one table and stopped against another. The ball stood as high as the table itself, which added to the chief's perplexity.

He had seen professor Engler roll that ball off the stage. How it had come back into the box on the platform was a riddle, until the chief decided that this must be a duplicate ball. What it had to do with Norgil's disappearance, Chief Harper could not guess; but having found the ball instead of the magician, he felt that one mystery might solve the other. Since the ball belonged to Engler, the police chief headed to the professor's dressing room.

Engler tried to explain something when the chief entered, but Heloise drowned him out with a series of raucous barks. From the way the police chief pawed around the place, the seal thought it was part of a new act. Not finding the other ball, Chief Harper demanded to know where it was.

"I rolled it into Norgil's dressing room," began Engler. "If you'll listen, I can explain—"

The police chief didn't wait. Reaching Norgil's door, he found it unlocked. Shoving the door open, he saw the only explanation that he wanted, in the very middle of the floor. There lay the other ball, but except for size and outward appearance it was quite different from the rubber sphere that Heloise loved to balance.

This ball was a hollow one, constructed of thin metal. Its secret was apparent, for it was broken apart, in two hemispheres, which lay like giant bowls, side by side. Beyond the demolished ball was an open window; as Chief Harper stared in that direction, he saw the blink of car lights; heard the sudden roar of a motor.

"There goes Norgil!" bawled the chief. "The professor is working with him. He had this fake ball behind a curtain on the stage. That's where Norgil went, into this ball, so Engler could roll it off. They left the real ball in the box!"

Out of his dressing room, Professor Engler was wildly trying to be heard, but between the bellows of the police chief and the fresh barks from Heloise, he didn't have a chance. Harper yelled for an officer to shove Engler back in his dressing room and keep him there. Together, the professor and a grabbing cop stumbled over Heloise, who was waddling out to see the fun.

Miriam reached the flattened pair, to find the professor stunned. Moreover, he had lost his ornate mustache in the fall. Miriam called for Chief Harper, but by then he was gone with his entire squad, in quest of Norgil. All that the girl could do was appeal to the officer who had custody of Engler. They agreed to revive the professor and learn what he had to tell.

Meanwhile, Norgil was leading the police a neat chase in his coupé. Rather than waste time in explanations from a jail cell, Norgil had gone through the cordon, with Engler's aid. Once in the clear, however, he needed the police to help him in the trapping of a real murderer, Luke Trevan.

Zigzagging through streets that he had learned well, Norgil picked landmarks that took the chase from town. Doubling back, he gained a lead, at the same time impressing his pursuers with his ultimate destination, the Ajax Paint plant. Still thinking of Norgil as the killer of Claude Gremble, the police naturally supposed that he might have some purpose for visiting the dead man's office.

Halting a few blocks short, Norgil saw that the trucks had arrived. On foot, he reached his own route, through the machine shop. Finding the shelved door, Norgil unwedged it. He looked into a wide-floored storeroom, beyond.

The truckers were working under lights, with Luke Trevan in charge. They were removing barrels of alleged turpentine, along with cans of so-called paint. But there were more of them than Norgil expected to find. He calculated that they outnumbered the police squad at least two to one.

Added to that, the police were arriving in foolhardy fashion. Norgil had expected them to cut off their sirens when they guessed his destination. Instead, they were coming with all the noise of a governor's escort. This wasn't going to work as Norgil planned it.

No chance for Norgil to fire a few shots that would excite the crooks, and make them easy prey for stealthily advancing police. A surprise was needed to force the crooks into showing their hand, and such an element had vanished, withered away by the sirens' wails. Norgil saw Trevan assemble his men; watched them crouch, with drawn guns, in the shelter of the trucks and metal-lined barrels. They were going to give it, as soon as the police appeared; then load up, and get away.

There were a few barrels deep in the storeroom. If Norgil could reach them, they would furnish shelter, but only for a few moments. Yet some such heroic action was needed, to save the police from slaughter. Having brought the officers to this trap, it was up to Norgil.

Drawing his only weapon, a stage revolver loaded with blanks, Norgil took a deep breath as he gripped the shelf beside him. As luck had it, his hand went past the edge of the faked door and reached a solid shelf. He pressed a box, which rattled slightly as he elbowed it.

It was an inspiration. As the shriek of the sirens blared from a block away, Norgil hooked the open-topped box under his free arm, and shoved through to the storeroom. Aiming his useless gun at the crouched men outdoors, Norgil blazed away with his blanks.

In more ways than one, those shots counted. They sent the crooks dodging, as well as real fire would have done. The bark of Norgil's gun told the police that something had started at the paint plant. Wheeling into shelter, Trevan saw Norgil sidestepping across the floor toward the barrels, deep in the storeroom.

"It's Norgil!" shouted Trevan. Get him, before he can reload. We'll use those barrels ourselves, and smear the coppers when they pile in after us!"

To a man, the crooks surged for the storeroom. At the barrels, Norgil gave his arm a sweep. The wooden box left his clutch, sent its contents scattering about the darkish concrete floor, scarcely noticed by the inrushing crooks. Even their smart leader, Luke Trevan, hadn't an idea of what was coming.

Norgil was over the barrels, down into shelter, as the first wide shots pinged the wall above him. After that, no bullets came within twenty feet of him. Slugs were flattening against the floor and ceiling, missing the walls entirely.

Small wonder, considering that Trevan and his band of a dozen were somersaulting everywhere. Their feet flying out from under them, they had no chance to aim with their hands. Nor were they able to save their heads. The falls that they took were hard ones, that brought skulls in direct contact with concrete.

The arriving police would have skidded, too, if Norgil had not come up to shout a warning. He was pitching paint cans at the few crooks who managed to rise. Norgil was too deep in the storeroom to be identified; Chief Harper saw him only as an unarmed man, who had somehow managed to stave off a dozen ruffians, who had gone after him with guns.

A tiny ball of steel stopped rolling at Harper's feet. Picking it up, the chief squinted at the floor. He saw a hundred other glimmers, as he strained his eyes, and made out the box beyond them. Officers were pointing to bullet-punctured paint cans along the walls, observing that oil was gushing from them.

The situation struck home to the police chief, all at once: he could tell who the man in the corner was; the purpose that had brought him here; the method by which he had floored a dozen crooks in a single sweep.

"Come on out, Norgil," called the chief. "I'd like to know the rest of this. Look out, though; don't go stepping on any of those ball bearings that you scattered. We don't want to lug you to the hospital, too."

Norgil came out, sweeping one foot ahead of him, to roll the ball bearings from his path. He picked up the box, and smiled at the marking on it. The box had contained a double gross, two hundred and eighty-eight balls of steel that had proven better than bullets.

Traveling everywhere along the concrete floor, the ball bearings had been like roller skates in a darkened hall. None of the crooks could possibly have missed them; there were too many. Once under foot, the ball bearings did the rest.

"Better take his gun, chief," suggested Norgil, gesturing to the senseless form of Luke Trevan. "It's probably the one he used to kill Claude Gremble. Maybe he intended to plant it on me later, but I doubt it. Trevan didn't even check to learn that I had an air-tight alibi.

"I was at the theater before Gremble called you, getting ready for my act. Miriam can tell you how Trevan hoaxed Gremble, to get rid of him. She was a witness to the murder. All that puzzles me is how Trevan found out what I knew."

Cars were arriving, bringing people from the theater, among them Miriam and Engler. The professor finally managed to get in his say. He was a private operative working for the Supreme Oil Co. who had come on tour at Norgil's invitation. The hollow ball happened to be in the equipment that he had hired, along with Heloise, the trained seal who hadn't lived up to her guarantee.

"It reminded me of the old animated-ball stunt," explained Norgil, "done by a contortionist inside it. I happened to mention the fact once to Engler. When he knew that I'd have to get offstage, through the cordon, he thought of the trick ball, and brought it with the rubber one. It was out of sight until we needed it. Maybe"—Norgil turned to the ex-professor with a grin—"it gave me

TRY THE STAR WAY TO SHAVE!
Famous since 1880
STAR
STAR WORLD'S LARGEST SELLING SINGLE EDGE BLADE
4 for 10¢
12 for 25¢

the inspiration for the ball-bearing act, later."

Officers were hauling Luke Trevan from the storeroom. Something fell from the murderer's pocket; the wadded paper that Miriam had noticed, in the gloom of Gremble's porch. Norgil picked it up; it was the current copy of *Variety*. Trevan had evidently bought it shortly after five o'clock.

Eagerly, Norgil thumbed the pages, and found the paragraph that he realized must be there. He showed the headline to Engler and Miriam. It said:

SUPREME OIL TO GO TELEVISION.

Pointing farther down, Norgil indicated his own name as the star of the coming attraction. Engler gave an understanding nod. He already knew about it, though Miriam did not.

"We didn't expect the news to leak," explained Norgil. "The television show was postponed, before Supreme announced it. With bootleg oil cutting into the business, Supreme felt that a large advertising campaign would be a boomerang. Naturally, having a contract with Supreme's new show, I was as anxious as they were to put the skids under the racket."

"Which you did," chuckled Engler, glancing at the floor, with its quota of a dozen groggy, handcuffed crooks, "and you put the skids under the racketeers as well."

Miriam had a comment.

"Then this unit tour is over," she said, with a glad sigh. "No more split weeks; no small towns for us. When I think of tanks—"

"When you think of tanks," blurbed Norgil, in the mock tone of a radio announcer, "think of Supreme Motor Oil!"

THE END.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE—

Here's a partial list of what you'll find in the next issue of Street & Smith's MYSTERY Magazine. Every story complete, and every one the best there is!

"THE TERROR IN MARTIN'S GLADE"—A really weird, suspense-filled mystery novel by Mark Harper.

"RED FACE"—Another Carrie Cashin novelette, by Theodore Tinsley.

"DEATH IS VAIN"—Jim Strong, one-man rackets squad, in another great yarn by Frank Gruber, who is this year's hit as a mystery writer, author of "The French Key," "The Laughing Fox," and other best-selling books.

"THE TWISTED TONGUE"—Doc Trouble back again, in a great story by Robert C. Blackmon.

AND OTHERS—ALL COMPLETE IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Street & Smith's

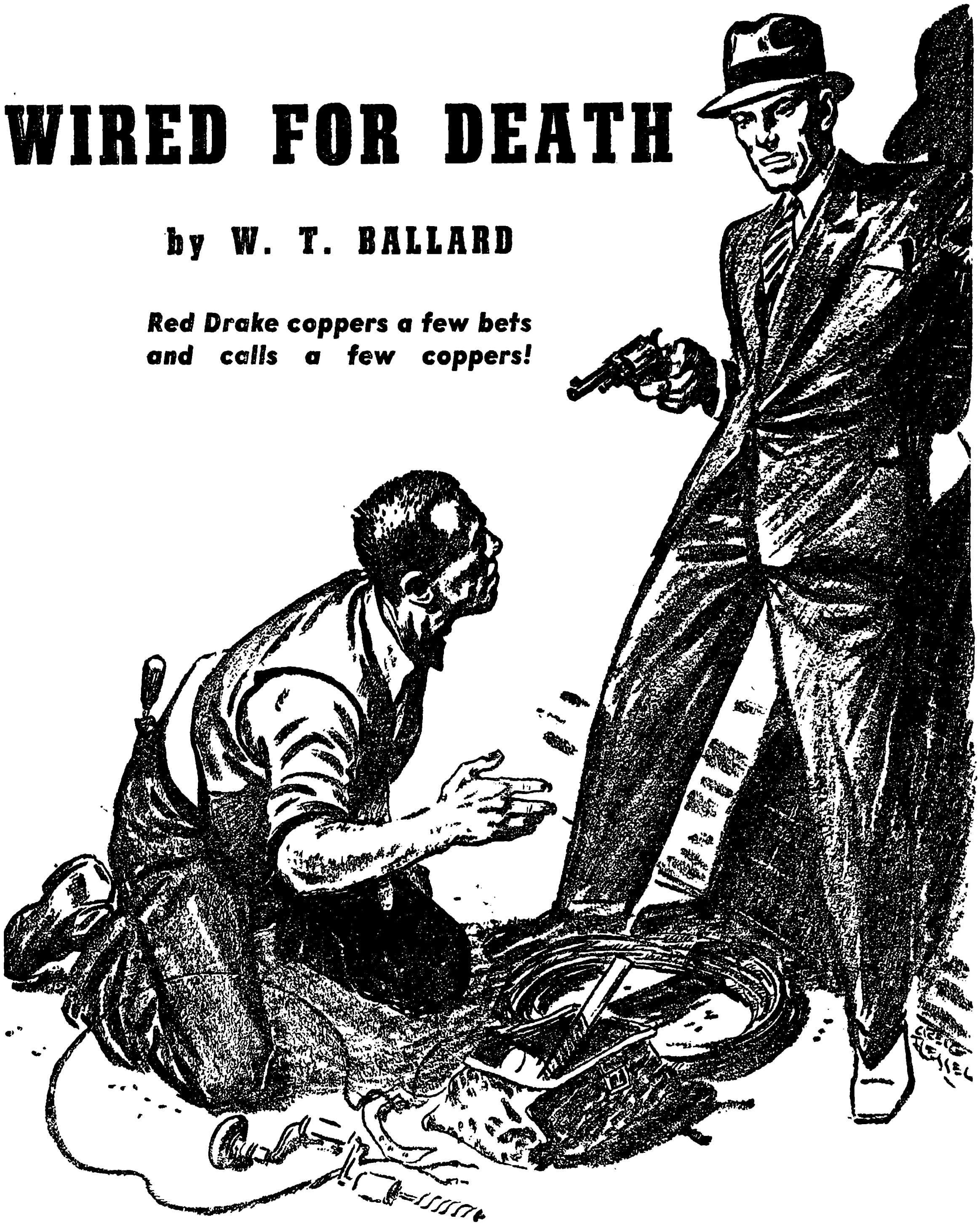
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

10 Cents—At All Newsstands

WIRED FOR DEATH

by W. T. BALLARD

Red Drake coppers a few bets and calls a few coppers!



CHAPTER I.

A GUY NAMED SUTTON.

A man had been killed out behind Barn 5 at the racetrack. The papers didn't carry more than half a stick on the killing, and that was in the second section. Even if the guy had been nothing but a bum, you'd have thought he'd rate more space than that. I folded my paper as my cab pulled up to the building, got out and went inside.

The place was enormous, all full of cables, wires, telephones and stuff. It should have been. It was the warehouse for the local phone company.

I asked to see a guy named Sutton. He turned out to be a kid, twenty-two or three, with a weak chin and squinting blue eyes. I could tell by the way he looked at me that he wasn't pleased to see me.

I said: "The name is Koble. Your brother wrote you that I was coming."

He wet his lips and said: "Uh-huh."

I told him: "Is it all set? Can you get the equipment?"

He wet his lips again. "Look. I can't talk here. Meet me down at John's restaurant at the corner of Front and First in a couple of hours." I nodded and went away.

In a couple of hours I was at John's, and the kid was there before me.

He said: "Listen to me, Mr. Koble. Since you wrote me a couple of months ago, things have changed."

I made my green eyes narrow. "What do you mean, changed?"

He hesitated. "Well, someone else is doing it now. Someone who—"

I reached across the table and got a handful of his shirt. "What are you talking about? You mean that you told someone and they're using the idea? I should blast you."

He got so white that the freckles stood out on his sallow cheeks like brown spots on a turkey egg. "I didn't, I tell you. It was—"

He never told me who it was. He never had a chance, because a gun roared somewhere behind me and the kid pitched down onto his face. I was on my feet with my gun in my hand, jumping out of the booth.

There was a long passage, and I was just in time to see the rear door slam. I went for it, but before I got it open a motor raced outside and all I saw was the rear end of a car as it pulled out of the parking lot. I didn't get more than a glimpse of the car, but I saw enough to know that it didn't have any back license plate.

I went back to take a look at the kid. I shouldn't have done that, because the fat proprietor was there. He let out a squawk when he saw the gun in my hand, and I had to lock him and the cook in the basement. There wasn't anyone else in the joint, and the kid was dead. I didn't waste any time getting out of that restaurant.

I got a trolley car at the next corner, rode it downtown and went into the biggest bookie joint in the city. I hadn't been there more than half an hour when a girl came in.

Charley followed her through the door and gave me the high sign. Looking at her surprised me. I thought Charley had made a mistake, but he didn't make many, so I eased up to the counter and leaned on it not a dozen feet from where she was talking to the boss.

I heard her say: "The man's making the connection now. He's coming through the wall from the basement of the next building. You'll have service some time this afternoon, or tomorrow at the latest."

The bookie gave her some money, and she went away. I hung around a few minutes, then left by the rear door that opened into the alley. I walked down the alley and went into the next building and down into the basement. I had to look around before I found the lineman, and when I did, I just stood and watched him for a few minutes.

He was a little guy, with thick shoulders and a round skull. The hair on his skull was so short it looked like he'd just broken stir and the warden had given him a haircut the day before he left. He had a pair of wire clippers in his hand and he was kneeling on the concrete floor, poking a wire through a little hole he'd made in the brick wall. He turned his round head and his blue eyes got big and startled when he saw the gun in my fist.

"Say—"

"Relax," I told him, "and behave yourself, or you've spliced your last wire."

He let the wire cutters drop from his grasp and screwed around on his knees until he could look at me without turning his head. "What's the idea of the heater?"

I told him: "Just to make sure that you answer questions. Who are you working for?"

He told me it was none of my damned business. I grinned at him sourly and swung the gun. The short hair was no protection, and the gun made a funny sound as it hit the side of his skull. I didn't hit hard—just enough to show him I wasn't fooling—but it rolled him over off his knees to the floor. He got up slowly, nursing his head.

"Now," I told him, "do you believe me, or do you still think I'm kidding?"

His eyes showed that he believed be. He said: "Carson. And he's not going to like it, you butting in this way."

"That," I said, "is just too bad. Come on, get up and show me where your switchboard is."

He got up, grumbling to himself. We went out of the cellar and up to the alley. There was a little truck in the alley and he swung into it.

I got in beside him and said: "Just because the gun is in my pocket, don't get any funny ideas that it won't go off."

He drove across town on Third Street and turned into Yale Boulevard. It shouldn't have been called a boulevard. It was a little twisting street that ran down from Hammond Circle toward the river.

They let them park on both sides, and there was just room enough to get between. He pulled up before a gray stone building, parked beside a fire plug and led the way into a dirty hall.

"Carson isn't going to like this."

I told him: "To hell with Carson. Keep going."

He kept going. The hall ended in a flight of dark stairs which led into a darker basement. We went down the stairs, along a brick passage, crossed an empty coalbin and found a door on the other side. He pushed the door open, and we went in.

CHAPTER II.

HANDS FULL OF GUNS.

The rooms beyond were windowless, but somewhere there was an air-conditioning system with a fan. The brick walls had been painted a light color. The whole place was clean and very businesslike. The row of switchboards made it look like a telephone exchange.

That's exactly what it was—a telephone exchange. But it wasn't connected with the local telephone company. This exchange was here for one purpose only—to relay information to the bookies around town.

The Federal government had jumped on the various wire services which supplied racetrack information to the bookmakers, made them shut off the service. It had left a swell hole and a bootleg phone company had sprung up in the State.

They got their news from outside racetracks by short wave, using a code which wouldn't mean a damn thing if someone cut in on the broadcast. After they got it, they relayed it to local bookmakers over a private telephone loop, and the bookmakers paid plenty for the service.

I grinned to myself. It was a nice set-up to muscle into. The man I'd forced to bring me here was one of their linemen, connecting a new phone to the circuit. The girl was the collector. No one would suspect a good-looking doll, even if the police happened to crash into one of the bookmakers' joints while she happened to be there.

And she *was* a good-looking doll. She was in the exchange when we walked in, and there were four men in the room with her.

One of them was picking up the stuff coming in by short wave; a second was decoding it. The others alternated at the telephone, shooting it out to their customers.

I motioned the little lineman into the group. One guy was speaking as I crossed the room.

"They're off and running at Latonia at one thirty-five. They'll be at post at Chicago in a few minutes. At Latonia it's War Call by a length; Ironsides is second; Mousetrap third—"

I knew that his voice was coming over loud-speakers into almost every joint in town.

The man at the radio receiver was taking down and translating the Chicago running. The man behind the guy at the mike turned around and saw me.

My gun was out of my pocket now, in my hand. He started to say: "What the hell—" stopped, and seemed to be choking on his Adam's apple.

The girl had turned, too. She had nice brown hair in waves. I saw her start, and cautioned her. "Watch it, toots. That dress of yours won't stop any more bullets than a man's coat would."

Her brown eyes got scornful. "A nice brave guy."

I said: "Nuts. Who did you expect to drop in—Sir Galahad? Don't be so cute, but get over and dig your nose into the wall. That goes for the rest of you. All but the mug at the mike."

He had a horse face, and it was turning a little yellow as he watched me. I snatched the slip from the radio guy as he moved over to take his place at the wall. It was the running of the first race at Chicago.

I told the guy at the mike: "Keep talking. Tell your customers there's been a runaway at Chicago and that post will be delayed four or five minutes. And you'd better make it sound convincing."

I glanced at the slip I'd taken from the radio man. Sweet Alder had won the first at Chicago, paying twelve forty.

There was a regular phone on the far side of the room. I crossed to it, careful to keep my gun on my prisoners, and took down the receiver. I dialed a number with my free hand.

A man answered. I said: "Charley? Yeah. Sweet Alder won at Chicago, paid twelve forty. Give the boys the flash and work fast. I'll hold the results for four minutes."

A mug on the far side of the room swore as he realized what was going on. He guessed right. He guessed that I had men going into all the big bookies, placing bets on a horse which had already won.

He said: "You can't get away with this, redhead."

I laughed at him. "The hell I can't! I'm doing it. Shut up, or I'll drill you."

We all stood waiting. They had

their hands in the air. The guy at the mike was talking about the runaway. "Post will be five minutes late in Chicago. I'll give you the rundown for the second at Latonia." He gave it to them while I listened.

At the end of five minutes I said: "O. K. Here's the dope from Chicago. Give it to them as if the race was being run now."

He gave it to them as if it was just coming in over the radio. He made a good job of it, and if I hadn't been standing where I could see the perspiration leaking off his forehead I couldn't have known that he was scared stiff. When he finished, he wiped his face with the back of his hand.

I told him: "Keep talking. Give them the dope from Kentucky—anything to keep them from getting suspicious until they get those bets paid off."

He went on talking into the mike. I kept him at it for ten minutes. I figured that by that time Charley and the rest of the men would have collected on the Sweet Alder bet and scrammed away from the bookie joints.

The next thing was to get myself into the clear. It was going to be tough. I pulled the guy away from the mike and walked all the men into the washroom and locked them there.

There was a little window in the far wall that they could climb through into the alley behind the building. I pretended not to have seen it. I locked the door and said to the girl:

"Come on, sweetheart. You and me are going to take us a nice ride."

Her brown eyes were very wide, but there wasn't any fear in them.

We went through the basement, up the stairs and along the hall. There was a cab cruising by and I flagged it down.

"Inside."

I thought for a moment that she would refuse, but after the instant hesitation she got into the cab. I saw one of the men come racing around the corner of the building as the cab pulled away. I leaned forward and told the driver to head for the park.

He went into it through Third Avenue and turned down the main drive. There didn't seem to be anyone else in the park, and after we had covered a couple of blocks I rapped on the glass and told the driver to stop.

The cab slowed, and I said to the girl: "This is where you get out, toots."

She stared at me for a full moment in silence, then she opened the door and climbed out. The driver was chuckling as we pulled away. He thought we'd had a fight.

"That's the way to treat 'em, pal. Rough."

I grunted, twisted to look through the rear window. There was another cab following, a long way back. I told the driver to take me to the Norcroft Hotel. It was a dive in the 200 block on River Street, but it was what I wanted. I went in and crossed the lobby.

Once it had been quite a fancy joint, with expensive furnishings and a lot of important guests. Those days were gone, and the fixtures were now plenty dingy and the management didn't ask any questions. It was glad enough to get a dollar a night for the rooms. I went up to mine, walked over to the phone and called a number.

Charley answered, and I said: "Did you and the boys collect?"

He chuckled. "Did we! Over a hundred and fifty grand. This is quite a racket."

I told him that it was and that I'd be over to get the dough. I left the hotel by the backway and was gone two hours. When I returned, I fitted the key into my door and pushed it open, then I stopped.

There were two men in the room and one of them had his hands full of guns. The guns were pointed directly at my chest, and the man behind them looked as if he would love to squeeze the triggers.

He said: "Come in. And close the door."

I went in and closed the door.

Leroy Carson was standing beside the swayback bed. Hanna was the guy with the guns.

CHAPTER III.

CARSON GETS TOUGH.

Carson was about forty—a big mug with straight black hair and very high cheekbones. He looked as if he had more than a touch of Indian. I guess maybe he had, at that. I'd heard some place that he'd come from Oklahoma originally. For years he'd been the biggest bookmaker in the city, and when the Feds broke the wire services, he'd decided to dish out track information himself. It was his joint that I'd crashed into.

Hanna was different. He came from New York, and he'd been a tough monkey all his life. He shot trouble for Carson, and he did it with guns.

There wasn't much weakness in the guy. My eyes raked around the room. The pigskin bag had been locked when I'd left.

Someone had opened it and they hadn't cared what they did to it. I stiffened a little. There had been newspaper clippings in that bag—clippings which said a lot of things about me, and none of it complimentary. I looked up, and there was a tiny twist to Hanna's lips and Carson was watching me with his dark eyes.

"Where's our dough, Koble?" It was Carson, and his voice sounded like breaking icicles.

I grunted. He said: "This is my town, redhead, and I don't like outside punks crowding in, even if their name is Koble and they are supposed to be tough back where they come from."

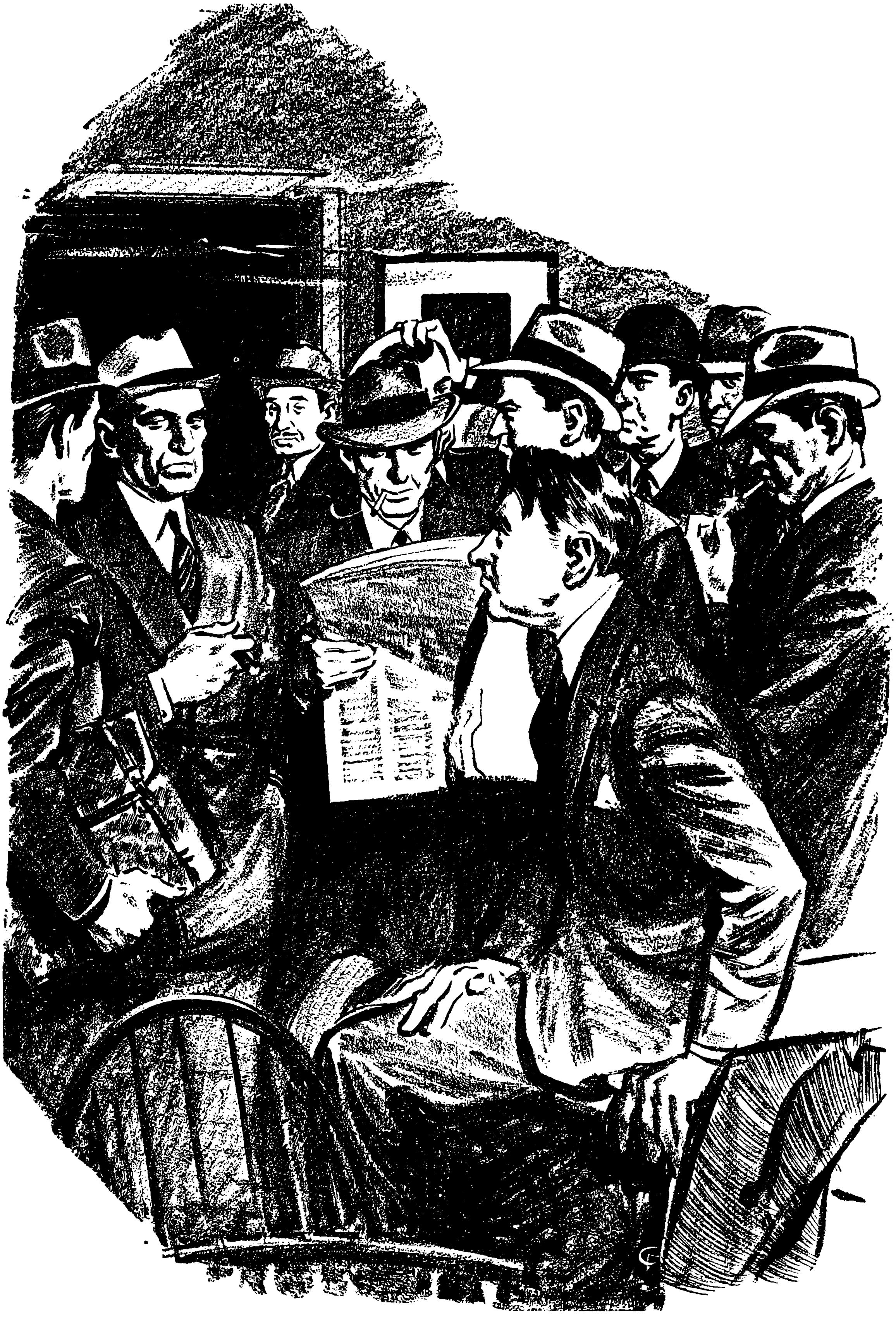
I sneered. It wasn't the easiest thing I've ever done, to sneer in the face of those guns. I said: "Listen. I don't care whose town it is. You were buying racing information from me when I was running the Statewide News Service, and when the Feds broke that up you wrote me and suggested that I come here and organize a private phone circuit.

"I got in touch with a pal of mine in Chicago whose brother worked in the local telephone warehouse, and we arranged to steal enough equipment to put in a bootleg system. Then I come here and find that you've gone ahead with the idea, freezing me out. What did you expect me to do—take it lying down?"

He licked his lips. "How'd you find out who was behind it, and where our exchange was?"

I grinned at him without mirth. "You did your damnedest to keep me from finding out, didn't you? You blasted that Sutton kid while he was trying to tell me, and you had a guy waiting to knock me over at the racetrack yesterday afternoon, only he got crossed up and killed some bum instead."

Carson was white to the lips. "Careful, mug. All we have to do is to blast you now, or we don't even have to blast you. That restaurant



All these hard men figured that Carson owed them dough—and he didn't have the money to pay off!

man saw you standing over young Sutton with a gun. He gave a pretty fair description to the cops. We could tell them where you are holed up."

I just laughed. "Be your age. I get a hundred and fifty grand this afternoon by breaking into your exchange, and holding the news on that Chicago race until after some of my pals had bet the winning horse. I got sixty grand in your own joints, and the rest you'll have to make good to the bookies, because if they were ever to hear how it happened they'd have your skin."

I could tell by his face that he knew I was right. He was in a bad spot, and I knew it. He was short of ready cash, and the bookies would start talking among themselves. When they found that they'd all been clipped on the same race, they'd begin to get suspicious.

I went on talking. "That's what you get for being hoggish and trying to freeze me out. You're trying to run something you don't know how to run, and like any lousy amateur you've made a lot of mistakes. If I'd been running things, this couldn't have happened."

Hanna told me: "You've got a big mouth for a punk that's looking down a couple of gun barrels."

I said: "A punk with a hundred and fifty grand has a right to have a big mouth. I could have had my boys bet three times as much as they did this afternoon and broken every book in town."

Carson was still playing it big. "Then why didn't you?"

I told him: "Because I didn't want the bookmakers broke. You've got this wire service all set up. I'm declaring myself in, and I want some bookies left for customers."

Hanna laughed. "So you're declaring yourself in. That's a hot one."

I paid no attention to him. "I'm in. I'll use the money I got this afternoon to square you with the bookies. I'll take a third cut on the wire service and run it—my way. Any argument?"

There didn't seem to be any. Carson was licked. Hanna still grumbled. Don't get me wrong. I knew what they both were thinking. They figured that as soon as they got their hands on the money, they'd have me knocked off. But they didn't have their hands on it yet, and I didn't mean for them to ever have.

Carson said: "Where's the dough?"

"Safe," I told him. "Safe, but I can produce it any time you say."

He said at eight o'clock that night at the Club Bellview, and I nodded. After they had gone I sat down on the bed, because I had a hard time standing up.

In a while I walked over to the pigskin bag, took a long pull from the bottle that was in it. Then I stripped and went into the bathroom and stood under a warm shower. After that I felt better. I dressed, went down and brought a cab over to the office of the telephone company.

They told me that the manager was out of town on sick leave and that the assistant was busy. I got by his secretary and was in his office before he knew that there was anyone around.

He was a nice-looking chap of forty, with a little gray showing at his temples and shrewd wrinkles about his tight mouth. He looked up from the desk to stare at me.

"What do you want?"

I told him: "To save your company some money."

His brows drew down for a moment, then he nodded to the office girl who was standing uncertainly in the doorway. "All right, Miss Tyler." She shut the door and went away.

He looked at me for another long moment as if my face were familiar to him, but he couldn't place it. Then he motioned to the chair. "Sit down."

I shook my head. "Never mind the chair. What I've got to say can be said in a couple of minutes. You probably don't know it, but your company's been robbed blind. There's been enough equipment stolen from your warehouse to put in an independent telephone system, serving over three hundred customers. What would it be worth to you to get that equipment back?"

He was staring at me harder than ever. Suddenly he stiffened. "Say. You've got red hair, and the man who shot poor Sutton had red hair. I'll bet—" His long-fingered hand was reaching for the phone on his desk.

I stopped him. My gun was out of my pocket, its short barrel peering at him over the edge of the desk. "Hold it, Mr. Snyder. You aren't going to yell copper or anything else."

He let the hand come away from the phone slowly. His eyes had widened, but he didn't show any fear. "All right, Mr. Murderer. You won't shoot, because you'd never manage to get out of here alive."

I showed him a lot of teeth when I grinned. "Don't put any blue chips on a bet of that kind, Snyder. I've shot my way out of tighter spots than this. I can drill you right now, run to the door shouting 'Catch that killer,' and the office force will go running around in circles hunting the guy I'm supposed to be chasing."

His mouth tightened some more. It was the only sign he gave, but I knew that my words had gotten under his skin. He said: "So now?"

"So now," I told him, "you and I are going to walk out of here. My gun's going to be in my pocket, and if you want to cheat your insurance companies, just make a phony move. On your feet."

H got up slowly, and I searched him for a gun. I didn't find any, and I pushed him toward the door, sliding my own rod into my pocket and holding it so I could use it in a hurry.

There must have been three hundred or more people in that building—some employees, others there to pay bills or make complaints. We walked through all of them, and Snyder never let out a peep. Once outside, I flagged down a passing cab, shoved him in and rode across town, trying to think what to do with him.

I finally repeated the maneuver I had used on the girl. I dumped him in the center of the park and rode away, leaving him staring after me. Snyder had probably taken the number of the cab, so I changed to another three blocks from the park. I gave the new driver an address a couple of blocks from my hotel. I stood on the sidewalk, watched the cab pull away, turned and walked the two blocks.

There was a man loitering across the street and I pretended not to see him. I guessed that it was one of Carson's crew, but I didn't think he'd bother me. I went into the hotel, made a couple of phone calls, got a bite to eat at a corner restaurant and at seven-thirty was on the corner of First and Columbus.

A car pulled past, and slowed. A man handed me a black brief case through the window, then the car pulled away. Carrying the case, I walked east on First and across to the Bellview.

It was ten after eight when I stepped into the foyer. It wasn't a bad joint—a little on the noisy side, but it was clean, and the customers all looked as if they knew which fork to use.

Carson wasn't in sight, but Hanna was, leaning against the checkroom counter waiting for me. His eyes took in the black brief case, getting a little smaller when he saw it.

"What's that—the dough?"

I said: "What do you care?"—flipped my soft felt to the checkroom girl and turned around. "Where's Carson?"

He jerked his head. "In the office, waiting."

I crossed a small bar, almost stepping on Hanna's heels. He went down a passage and pushed open the door.

Carson was on the other side of the room looking out of the window, and the brown-haired girl I'd seen that afternoon was at his side. They were arguing about something. They were so engrossed in the argument that they didn't know they weren't still alone until Hanna coughed.

Carson swung around, the girl turning with him. Her brown eyes widened when she saw me, then they got very narrow.

"What are you doing here?"

I grinned at her. "Didn't Carson tell you, baby? I'm the new boss."

She looked as if she didn't believe it. She twisted her head, said something to Carson in an undertone.

He laughed and told her: "This is Red Koble. Meet Honey Martin, Red."

I said: "It's a pleasure," and the way I said it brought the color up into the girl's cheeks.

Carson didn't like it, but he managed to keep from showing it much. "Did you bring the dough?"

I tapped the case with my finger. "Part of it."

He said: "What do you mean—part?"

I shrugged. I had to pay off the boys who helped me this afternoon. There's a hundred and twenty-five grand here. You'll take that much and like it."

He said: "Oh, we will, huh?"

I nodded. "Yeah. We stood and looked at each other.

His eyes dropped first. "You're pretty tough, aren't you, Koble?"

I grinned at him. "I'll get along."

He said: "But you're not very smart. You brought the money in here—and the cops are still looking for you for killing that phone man. You got quite a spread in the evening papers. A good description, and everything. What's to keep me from hollering copper, having them come down and haul you away?"

I said: "Nothing." I kept my voice steady, although I wasn't feeling very steady inside. "Nothing at all. Only I always talk a lot when I see a uniform. I'm liable to tell them about the nice, pretty wire service you've built up in this town. They'll have a lot of fun tearing out the telephones you so carefully spotted in all the bookie joints."

He didn't like that a bit. I saw he didn't like it, and I grinned. "No, Carson. I may not be smart, but I'm a hell of a lot smarter than you are. Don't think I didn't figure every angle when I showed up here. Now, listen. I want a list of every joint you serve. I know how much each one of them lost on that little caper I pulled this afternoon. I had my boys keep a record."

He said: "What are you going to do?"

I told him: "I'm going around and pay off. That way, I'll know it's done. If there's anything left, you get it."

He didn't like that either. I could see him trying to think of something to say. Finally he told me: "You'd better take Hanna along with you. Carrying that kind of dough around town isn't the safest thing in the world."

"I've got a better idea than that," I told him. "I'll take the girl along."

"The girl—"

I nodded. "That way, I'll be safer. I don't think you or any of your men will start sniping at me if she's riding around in the same cab. Come on, baby. Get your coat. Papa and you are going by-by."

Carson said: "Oh, no you don't!"

Hanna's hand moved toward his side coat pocket. I let the brief case fall away a little. I'd been holding it up in front of me with my left hand. Now they could see my right. My gun was in it. I was very polite when I told Hanna to be careful.

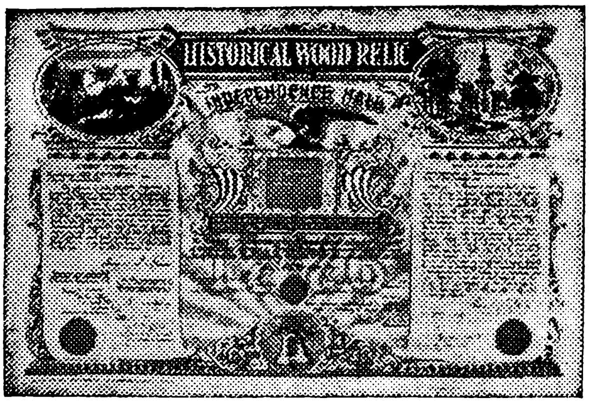
He snarled, but he was careful not to move. I said to Carson: "Look, mister. Don't ever get the idea that you're smarter than Red Koble, because when you do you're buying yourself a lot of trouble. The girl's coming with me. We're going to play it nice and quiet, and we don't want any back talk from you. Come on, toots."

CHAPTER IV.

BOOKIES WANT THEIR DOUGH.

For a moment she hesitated, then moved toward the door. I went after her, careful not to turn my back on the two men. Once in the club proper I felt pretty safe. I

Historical Wood Relic from the Most Sacred Building in America



● When Independence Hall was being restored, beams that supported the famous East Room, in which the Declaration of Independence was signed, were removed.

Over these beams have walked George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and many others—the wood has become sacred.

Pieces of these beams, with sworn affidavits as to their source, have been mounted on beautiful cards, size 10"x14", all lithographed in three colors and ready to frame.

Every patriotic American should have in his home, a relic from America's most sacred shrine. We will mail the card and relic attached, ready for framing, for only 25 cents.

WOLF ART COMPANY
S. E. Corner 3rd & Cambria Sts.
Philadelphia, Pa.

Inclosed is 25 cents. Kindly send me the Historical Wood Relic ready for framing.

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

CITY.................................... STATE...............

didn't think Carson would start anything in front of the cash customers.

She got her coat from the checkroom. I paid a dime for my hat, and we went out and got into a cab. The cab took us down Front Street toward River. The first stop I made was at a cigar store.

There was a little man behind a counter—a little man with a bald head. I made the girl go in with me. I said: "Mr. Waltham?"

He nodded at me and I said: "You lost two thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars when Sweet Alder won the first at Chicago this afternoon, didn't you?" I was reading from a list I'd taken from my pocket.

He stared at me. His eyes almost popped out of his face. "Say, what is this? Who are you? What are you trying to pull?"

Instead of answering I opened the brief case, counted out two thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars on the counter. "That's to square it," I told him. "The wire service went haywire this afternoon. That bet you and the other boys lost was made after the horse had won the race."

He was still squinting at me, and he wasn't making any motions to touch the money. You'd have thought it was covered with poison or something.

"Say! Who are you, anyhow?"

I told him the name didn't matter, that Carson was sorry about the slip and that he was paying off to cover the boys' losses.

He still didn't quite understand. I said: "Look. It's going to take too long to round up all the boys and pay them off. How about you getting the word around that Carson will copper their losses if they'll come to this address." I passed over a typewritten slip.

The girl was staring at me, and there was a startled look on her face. She started to say something, but I didn't give her the chance. I got the fingers of my right hand around her arm and pushed her back out to the cab.

Inside she said: "Just what are you trying to pull, redhead?"

I didn't say anything until after I'd given the driver the address, then I leaned back against the hard seat. "Why would I be pulling anything? I'm just lazy. Why should I take the dough back to all the bookmakers? Let them come and get it."

"But why give the address of the wire service exchange? None of them knew it before this, and it's not safe for them to know. There's always someone in a gang like that to shout for the police."

I shook my head. "Don't let that worry you, baby. I'm death on squealers." I let my words have a double meaning, and she got it.

We rode the cab back downtown and I took her into a drugstore with me, then I told her to call Carson and tell him to meet her at the wire-service headquarters in an hour. She didn't like the idea, and started to refuse.

I said sharply: "Look. I'm trying to straighten out the mess Carson made. If you want to help, call him and tell him to come and bring Hanna."

The girl had that strange look on her face again. "It seems that I smell a rat somewhere."

I grinned. "Little girls should keep their noses clean. Come on, make that call or I'll get rough." She made the call.

I listened, but as far as I could tell she didn't say anything that I hadn't wanted her to say. When she came out of the booth I asked:

"How'd he take it?"

She said: "He was suspicious. He wanted to know what you were up to."

I nodded. "I rather thought he would. O. K., sister. Have you got a home?"

"Got a home?"

I nodded. "Anyhow, get in that cab, go home, pack your things, and catch the first train out of this burg. Things are going to begin to pop around here, and there's no use you getting jammed up in the mess."

She caught my shoulder and swung me around. "Look, redhead. Just what is your game anyhow?"

I shrugged, and lied. "Carson thinks that he's a wise boy and that he can shove me around. I'm going to show him that he can't. Before this night is over, I'll have the wire service and he'll be out in the cold."

She stared at me. "Did you kill that fellow named Sutton—the one the evening papers say you did?"

"What do you care?"

She hesitated for a full minute, then without a word turned and started down the street. I watched her go, then I climbed into the cab and gave the driver the address of the wire-service exchange.

There were already some men milling around the entrance when my cab pulled up. I judged that they were bookies who had heard that Carson was paying off on the bad bet and had come to collect."

I showed them how to get down the basement and into the wire room. There were a couple of men there—Carson's men—and they didn't like it.

One of them made a dash for the outside phone. I got between him and the phone and stood there, my right hand sunk in my overcoat pocket. He didn't know whether I had a gun in the pocket or not. There was only one way he could find out.

That was by keeping on coming, and he didn't have the nerve.

The place was filling with men. It looked like a convention of some kind. There must have been over two hundred in the basement by the time Carson came in.

He was trailed by Hanna, and both their faces looked like thunderclouds. The waiting men gave back, making a passage, and Carson walked directly toward me.

"What the hell's going on here?"

I pretended to be dumb. "What are you talking about?"

A vein at the side of his skull began to throb. He was so choked

I MAKE SURE YOU GET A BIG, BIG BOTTLE
PEPSI-COLA
A SPARKLING BEVERAGE
REFRESHING-SATISFYING
12 OUNCES
PEPSI-COLA
REFRESHING-ENJOYABLE
FAMOUS FOR OVER 40 YEARS
5¢
12 OZ. BOTTLE
I MAKE SURE THE FLAVOR HITS THE SPOT

with rage that it was almost impossible for him to talk.

"What kind of a double cross is this?" He was barely whispering. I don't think anyone in the room heard him besides me.

I raised my voice. "They've all come down for that payoff you promised on that Sweet Alder bet, so go ahead and pay them off."

He looked at me helplessly. He began to see what I was doing to him. Here were over two hundred men—hard men who made their living on the fringe of the racket and had to be tough to survive.

CHAPTER V.

SNYDER MAKES A CALL.

They all figured that Carson owed them dough; they'd come here to collect, and he didn't have the money to pay off. He was through in this town—through, unless he could figure some way to pay.

His eyes fastened on the brief case which I was still carrying, and a ray of hope shot through them. He said to Hanna: "Get the case." At the same moment he jerked a short-barreled gun.

I wanted to laugh, but I didn't. I raised my free hand and extended the case with the other. Hanna snatched it and ripped it open.

His face was certainly a picture when he saw the wadded newspaper inside. That case had held two thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars. I'd paid it out to the bookmaker Waltham. That left nothing but newspaper.

Hanna swore, and there was a sick look on Carson's face. "I should blast you!" he grated. "Where's that dough?"

I just grinned at him. The crowd had been watching us, not understanding just what was going on. One or two began to mutter, and some man toward the rear called out:

"Hey, Carson. When do we get our dough?"

Hanna was saying: "You've got to raise some somewhere. Anywhere. You'd better call the boss and call him quick."

Carson's face was ugly. "I can't do that." He was staring at me, and there was murder in his eyes.

"You can't do anything else." Hanna's voice was sharp. "These mugs are here for a payoff. If they don't get it there will be more hell than the devil ever ruled over."

Carson knew that was right. He nodded, and his tone was vicious. "All right, I'll call, but keep this punk under your gun. If you have to burn him down with every bookmaker in town watching, it's all right by me." He went over and used the phone.

Hanna jammed his gun hard against my ribs, spun me around and got the gat from under my arm. Then he shoved me back against the wall.

Carson came away from the phone. His face was tight. Hanna looked at him and Carson nodded.

"He's coming right over. He can't raise it all, but he said he could get hold of twenty-five or thirty grand. That will be enough to keep these mugs quiet until morning." He stepped up onto a chair and spoke to the assembled men. "There's been a hitch, fellows. The guy that was bringing the dough for the payoff hasn't showed up. I've got some more coming—not enough to square it all, but you'll all get part tonight, and the rest tomorrow."

There was a lot of grumbling, and he snapped at them: "Listen. You all know me. My word's good."

His voice drowned out their grumbling. "Now be quiet for fifteen minutes." He stepped down and turned to Hanna.

"Bring that crazy redhead in here." He motioned to a small private room on the left.

Hanna pushed me forward. We waited almost fifty minutes, then the door swung back and Snyder, the assistant manager of the telephone company, walked in.

He was carrying a Gladstone bag, and from the way he walked you could tell it was heavy. He stopped when he saw me and his mouth fell open a little. "That's the guy who was in my office this afternoon—the guy who was trying to sell me back the stolen equipment."

Carson nodded. "How much did you get?"

Snyder said: "Only twenty-one thousand. It's all I could raise without—"

He never finished the sentence, for the door swung open suddenly and the girl was standing there staring at us.

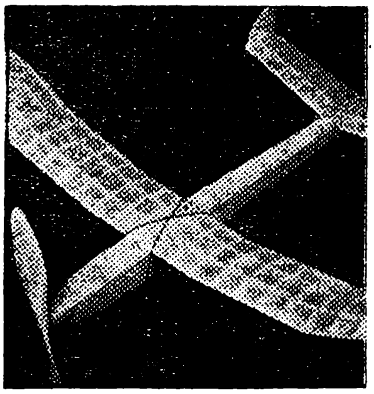
I swore sharply as she called: "Red! Red! There are cops all around the building! You're trapped!"

"Cops!" The men around me had stiffened. Snyder turned wildly. "I've got to get out of here."

Hanna had grabbed the girl's wrist and yanked her into the room. I hadn't moved. I said: "Snyder's got to get out. Murder doesn't set well on his conscience."

He whirled, and drove his fist into my face. He shouldn't have done that. A moment before I'd been in a hell of a spot. I couldn't get close enough to either Carson or Hanna to do any good, but now it was different.

I grabbed his wrist as I ducked under the blow, whirled him around and pulled him in close. Before he knew what I was doing I had the



Among the Winners

Bud Van Wyck, Paterson, N. J.
Vincent Abajain, Passaic, N. J.
Junior Porter, Erwin, N. C.
Bill Ramsey, Daytona Beach, Fla.
Walter Seegmiller, Daytona Beach, Fla.
Harold Jeppsen, Minneapolis, Minn.
—and many others.

To win a share of $265 in cash and prizes

all they had to do was fly a Class C rubber-powered model in a local contest, have the record of the flight attested by the Contest Director and mail it to Street & Smith. We will enter it for the month received in the May to September, 1940, contest, for the following monthly awards:

1st PRIZE—$25.00
2nd PRIZE—$10.00
3rd to 10th PRIZES—Model Kit of the Korda-Wakefield World's Champion Model—Value $1.00 Each
11th to 20th PRIZES—Model Kit of the Cahill-Wakefield World's Champion Model—Value $1.00 Each

GET YOUR CLASS C PLANE FREE

With a 12-issue subscription to both THE AVENGER and MYSTERY MAGAZINE we will send you FREE a "Sun Spot," Class C, rubber-powered, 36-inch wing-spread model kit which is now winning many of the prizes. Full details will be mailed you with your model kit.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC.
Dept. N-C, 79 7th Ave., New York, N. Y.

Inclosed is $2.00 for which kindly send me a 12-issue subscription to both THE AVENGER and MYSTERY MAGAZINE and a "Sun Spot," Class C, rubber-powered, 36-inch wing-spread model kit for making the plane which I will enter in the contest for the monthly awards. This offer does not apply to Canada.

NAME..........
ADDRESS..........
CITY.......... **STATE**..........

gun from his pocket and snapped a shot at Carson.

The shot caught him directly between the eyes and he went over without a sound.

Hanna was holding the girl with one hand. With the other he sent a bullet toward me, but Snyder was between us. He took the bullet in the chest as the door behind Hanna crashed in and the cops grabbed him from behind.

I walked over and nodded to the first man in. "Hello, Charley. Nice work. You timed it swell."

He grinned back. "You didn't do such a bad job yourself. We've got about every known bookie in town penned up in the other room."

The girl was staring at me.

I told her: "You thought I was Red Koble. Well, I'm not. My name is Drake, and I'm head of the undercover squad for the State Racing Commission. I'm sorry, Honey, but I'm afraid—"

I stopped, because she had started to laugh, then she sobered. "It seems that neither of us are who we are. We're two other people. My name isn't Honey Martin. It's Norma Wahl. My dad's the manager of the phone company."

"Then what were you doing running around acting as a collector for Carson?" I asked.

She said: "It's a long story, which I'll make short. I was in school in New York—have been for three years—and dad got very ill. We were afraid to tell the company how ill, for fear that he'd lose out, so he turned things over to Snyder months ago.

"One of the girls from the business office came to see me. She didn't know what was going on, but she said that Snyder was selling phone equipment to a man named Carson. I rushed home and went around to Carson's place, pretending to hunt a job. I gave him a good sales talk and he made me his collector. I figured that way that I might pick up a lot of information. I was just about to go to the police when all this happened."

I nodded. What a nice kid like that had been doing around Carson had been bothering me. I told her: "My part is even simpler than that.

"This guy named Koble was murdered at the racetrack a couple of days ago. From papers we found in the grip at his hotel, we learned who he was and that he'd been coming here to start a wire service. We already knew that one was running, but we didn't know who was behind it.

"We suspected Snyder at the phone company. I tried to get him to tip his hand by going there this afternoon. No luck, so I had to get him over here tonight. I knew that he'd be afraid to come, that he was bound in with the two men that Carson killed, but I couldn't prove it. I had to get him into his own wire room to wire him for death."

She said: "And I almost spoiled your play by dashing in and shouting 'cops.'"

I said: "Why'd you do that?"

She looked at me, then away. "I'd read in the night paper that you had killed Sutton. I hoped that you hadn't. But some way . . . somehow I didn't want you caught—even if you had."

I reached out a hand and put it on her shoulder. She didn't pull away, and Charley chose that moment to come in. He's my assistant—a good guy who has saved my life a couple of times. I like him ordinarily, but at that moment I hated his insides.

THE END.

No one but Bert Ayres could prove that a murderer had

BLOOD ON HIS HANDS

by MILTON LOWE

Death itself held no terror for him. Its coming would release him from the affliction that had made a grim tragedy of his life. Yet his blood ran cold at the thought of being murdered.

He lay motionless in bed, heart pounding. He was like a corpse, wasted and worn by forty years of suffering. Only his eyes showed the glow of life, and they burned feverishly as he summoned courage and strength.

On impulse he forced himself up, stretched his raillike arm for the telephone at the bedside, clutched it. He had to phone the one man he could trust above all others. His lips moved swiftly as he lifted the instrument to his face. A few seconds later the resonant voice he had not heard in months came over the wire.

Moistening parched lips, he said, "Bert, this is Philip Mard. You once said if I should ever need you I was only to call."

"Phil Mard!" It was a cry of pleasure, vibrant and inspiring. "How glad I am to hear from you!"

The sick man interrupted, as though he knew that every second was precious. "Come quickly, please. I'm . . . I'm going to be murdered!"

"Murdered!" The word resounded metallically in the receiver. "Good Lord! Tell me everything—now!"

Philip Mard suddenly froze to the bedclothes, mouth agape, eyes bulging. He tried to scream, but only an insignificant yelp issued forth. It was climaxed by a swish that ended with a soft thud. One other sound followed—a gurgling sigh.

Miles away Colonel Bert Ayres was gripping the phone with an icy hand. He had just heard the sigh, understood its meaning. He had heard that same exhalation of breath on the battlefields of France, Spain and China. Instantly his mind reverted to the horrible sights of men being bayoneted, rammed with swords. They, too, had emitted the unmistakable sigh which had just wafted over the phone.

For a fraction of a second Bert Ayres remained poised, a striking figure in a dark serge suit that made him seem taller, more formidable, than ever. He realized immediately why the instrument in his hand had gone silent. Then he roused himself, quickly cradled the phone, pivoted, seized his hat and headed for the door.

As he strode into the night his movements seemed fluid, each action flowing into the next. His two hundred pounds had the speed and agility of a lightweight, the surefootedness of a panther. His large, piercing eyes held a gleam that was strange and frigid, but the rest of his face was an inscrutable mask.

He hailed a taxi, jumped in, snapped the address of his destination. Something about him caused the driver to gulp once, shift gears rapidly, then rocket his machine on its way.

Twenty minutes later the taxi swerved into a private driveway, circled to the entrance under a stone canopy that jutted from the old mansion's left wing. Ayres bounded out as the taxi stopped. He paid off the driver and raced up the short flight of steps to the house.

Ordinarily, Bert Ayres would have phoned Inspector Manton of the police department. But this time he depended upon quick work to glean something from the inmates of the mansion. But the surprise was all his the next moment.

He reached out for the bell, fumbling in the darkness of the landing for the button. As he did, his fingers strummed on a taut string running perpendicular to the landing. Almost as his hand brushed the string, a sixth sense conveyed a warning.

He sprang back, heard a grating

noise from above. He tripped over a potted plant, grabbed the pillar nearby for support. Down hurtled some ungainly object. It scraped his shoulder, crashed at his feet. Had he been forward another six inches his skull would have been bashed in.

Ayres allowed the suspicion of a smile to cross his lips. As quickly as he had come, his arrival had been anticipated. The killer, he realized, had overheard Phil Mard's request.

Striking a match and holding it cupped in his big hands, he surveyed the landing. Splintered wood from a flower box, a mate to the one he had tripped over, lay at his feet. Dirt had spilled, and there was nothing but mangled leaves and branches to indicate a plant had once flourished in the box.

He glanced up to the ledge above the door's arch. The plant had been placed precariously, so that a touch of the taut string brought it down. Even as he studied the scene, the landing light blossomed, illuminating the place.

The door opened. A startled, bewildered man in an oxford-gray suit stared out. He looked at the broken flower box, the dirt-splattered form of Bert Ayres. Recognition supplanted the perplexed expression on the man's thin, ascetic face.

"Colonel Ayres," he said respectfully. "Were you expected?"

"Yes, Alfred. By Mr. Mard. Is anyone with him?"

"No, sir. Doctor Leonard insists that this hour be for rest. It also gives the doctor a chance to get out for a walk. But Mrs. Mard will be able to see you. She and Captain Elvero are around somewhere. Last I saw of them, they were together in the library."

He stopped, letting his glance at the flower-box wreckage convey his thoughts. Ayres grinned at Philip Mard's right-hand man. Alfred Hernan was valet, secretary and companion rolled into one.

"Guess it was pretty clumsy of me," said Ayres. "In the darkness I kicked that box around as though it was a football."

Alfred was suddenly all concern. "Are you hurt?"

"Nope," laughed Ayres. "Take me to Mr. Mard, please. Er . . . it's pretty important. Don't announce me to the others just yet."

"As you say, sir," Alfred said with a bow.

He stood aside to allow Ayres to enter. The mustiness of the old mansion seemed heavier than it ever had been. A vague, elusive odor seemed to emanate from the walls, the floor, the furniture. Large and ornately decorated in harmony with Mrs. Maria Mard's Castilian ideas of magnificence and splendor, the interior depressed the American in Bert Ayres. It was like walking into a mausoleum.

Alfred escorted him up a flight of carpeted steps, along a wide corridor to the right wing of the house. Guitar strains came softly from the floor below. Ayres heard the muffled singing of a man, guessed that Captain José Elvero had not lost his flair for serenading.

Alfred finally halted before a large door. Instantly Ayres' jaws clenched and his fists knotted tighter at his sides.

"I'll go in alone," he suggested to Alfred.

The secretary shook his head in dissent, adding. "There are formalities to be observed, sir." He knocked gently.

There was no answer. Bert Ayres felt his muscles hardening. Puzzled, Alfred knocked again, then gave Ayres a troubled look. He was about to say something when another door down the corridor squeaked, causing Ayres and Alfred to wheel around.

A middle-aged man, quite tall, elegantly attired even to a pince-nez on a hooked nose, was striding toward them.

"What does this mean?" he demanded irately. "My orders were not to disturb Mr. Mard during this hour."

Bert Ayres resented Dr. Leonard's attitude, yet managed a smile. "Don't blame Alfred," he declared. "Mr. Mard asked me to come here without delay."

The doctor's small, deep-set orbs flashed incredulously. He was about to retort sharply when he recognized Bert Ayres.

"Colonel!" He extended a moist, limp hand. "I am glad to see you again." He looked darkly at Alfred. "Alfred ought to know better than interrupt Mr. Mard—excite him like this."

The clatter of high heels, the heavy tread of a man's step, mingled on the stairway of the right wing. Ayres primed himself to accept the inevitable of having Maria Mard and Captain José Elvero joining them before he could enter the death room. They appeared on the landing at that moment.

Maria Estonce Mard had not changed since Ayres had last seen her. If anything she was more attractive. Dark-brown eyes sparkled, and in the mauve evening gown her faultless skin was at its best advantage. A stride behind her, wearing the uniform of captain of the Royal Guards, came Elvero.

Ayres bowed to her. With a low cry of joy she came to him. Captain Elvero, with effortless grace, bowed as Ayres did, then offered his hand. It was Dr. Leonard who explained the situation.

"Colonel Ayres says Mr. Mard asked him to come here at once."

Immediately glances were traded between Mrs. Mard and Elvero. The doctor tried to hide a smirk. Ayres understood that there was friction in that house. A flush mounted on the woman's cheeks, then her gaze went to Bert Ayres.

"It must be important," she said. "Alfred, announce the colonel at once." She held herself regally, superbly.

"But . . . but—" protested the secretary. "Mr. Mard does not answer."

Bert Ayres scrutinized them, interpreting as well as he could their expressions. Only the doctor appeared to accept the statement without surprise.

"Then he must be asleep—"

Ayres, no longer able to restrain himself, seized the opportunity. Spinning around, back to the door, he declared in a voice coated with ice.

"Yes . . . asleep. His final one!" He went on without pausing. "Philip Mard phoned me that he was about to be murdered. And he did not finish that conversation with me!"

Maria Mard shrieked, swayed. Captain Elvero leaped to her before she could slump to the floor. Dr. Leonard stared dumbly, rooted to the spot. Alfred jumped for the door. Ayres intercepted him, gripping him firmly by the arms.

"Hold up, Alfred," he ordered sternly, then turned to the doctor. "See to Mrs. Mard. Alfred and I will go in now."

He released the agitated man, pushed into the room. Alfred darted in like a rabbit, stopped short, a scream bursting from him. Ayres shut the door, looked from the petrified secretary to the bed.

Hardened as he was to gruesome sights, Bert Ayres felt a twinge of horror. Philip Mard lay across the bed, face upward, neck twisted as though he had been trying to see his assailant. Protruding from his back was a gold-plated dagger. It glinted against the stained pillowcase.

Swallowing a breath despite himself, Bert Ayres blinked back the flood of memories. Phil Mard and he had been close friends. They had met during the first World War, later had traveled together on hunts and explorations. Both he and Mard were scientists, had unearthed fragments of previous civilizations, but their friendship had blossomed because they both had an overwhelming interest in criminology.

But whereas Bert Ayres developed his interest until he had become an international expert on crime, the dreaded disease of hemophilia had curtailed Philip Mard's activities. Mard had realized that a slight cut might have proved fatal; because once his blood began to flow, stanching it was practically impossible. It lacked the quality of coagulation.

Always he had lived in the shadow of death—only to die by the hand of a murderer!

The irony of it brought a vow to Bert Ayres' lips. He would not rest until his friend's killer paid for this crime. Rage swept him. In war it was soldier against soldier, but in that bedroom a helpless man had been slain without a chance of defending himself.

Not for an instant was Ayres forgetting that the murderer was still in that house. Those hostile glances had betrayed much.

Now, as impersonally as he could, he surveyed the scene minutely. Obviously Philip Mard had been struck when his back was to the door. The murderer had sneaked in, advanced unheard to plunge home the dagger. It was the most cowardly killing imaginable.

Stretched across the bed was the telephone, its cord dangling between the bed and the small table nearby. Ayres did not attempt to touch anything. Alfred came closer to him, unnerved, yet striving to keep the lid on his emotions.

"What shall I do—call the police?"

"No—not yet," said the colonel. His gaze was riveted on the ghastly wound where blood had caked. It brought a frown to his face, but he did not comment. It occurred to him that the order not to disturb Mard during that hour had played into the murderer's hand. Ayres scowled. How did it happen the doctor, who usually took that hour for a breathing spell, had remained indoors that night?

Turning slowly to Alfred, Ayres said, "A great deal has been happening in this house lately; things Mr. Mard would have wanted you to tell me. He trusted you."

Alfred trembled, tears welling up in his eyes. "I'd do anything to help, sir . . . anything!"

"Fine. Had Mr. Mard any harsh words with anyone—his wife, the captain, the doctor?"

Alfred hesitated, unable to decide whether he should answer. From his hesitancy Ayres understood Alfred knew things. He prompted him.

"This is no time for mixed loyalties, Alfred."

The secretary squared his shoulders, tried to meet the colonel's inflexible gaze. Being loyal to his dead master meant being disloyal to those who lived; those whom he now would depend upon. Finally, voice choked with grief, he spoke.

"Mr. Mard has been most unreasonable lately, sir. Dr. Leonard said it was because Mr. Mard had shown a marked improvement in his battle against his disease."

Ayres didn't quite understand. Improvement, in hemophilia—how? But he inquired on another point. "Unreasonable—about what?"

Alfred clenched his hands, then abruptly spread them in resignation. "I may as well say it, sir. Mr. Mard found everything cause for anger. He thought he was being poisoned, told me about it privately. When I tried to ridicule the idea he accused *me* of being the one who was poisoning him. Other times—"

"Go on, Alfred."

"I don't like to say any more, but"—he shrugged—"other times he thought his own wife was trying to poison him so she could be free to elope with Captain Elvero. You know about them—their friendship before Mr. Mard married her. Then again there were times when he complained that Dr. Leonard was weary of treating him and wished to end things."

Suspicion already planted in Ayres was being fanned by Alfred's reluctant disclosures. Captain Elvero had been one of Philip Mard's associates in exploration, and it was through the captain that Mard had met Maria. That the captain still admired her was natural enough. Ayres himself had found her charming, companionable. And as for Leonard—the doctor was enigma. Ayres couldn't believe the doctor would turn killer, even to collect the legacy Mard had promised him.

Much needed clarification; especially the doctor's attitude to the other members of the house, and the character of the blood Ayres noticed at the fatal wound.

"That dagger," Ayres commented. "Has it always been around?"

Alfred looked at it, shuddered. "Mr. Mard used it as a paperweight.

"CASH" GORMAN
the Wizard of Odds

would bet that Georgia would go Republican—if the odds were right.

"Cash," a young man of ideas, prefers to live by his wits. His chief diversion is to allow himself to be taken for swindlers' bait and then swindle the swindler.

"Cash" is an adventurer in money. When thrown into contact with crooks who carry and use guns he frowns on the practice. "Bullets," defines "Cash," "are for people without brains."

In the first issue of his new magazine, THE WIZARD, "Cash" Gorman sinks $135,000 into a helium well offered him by Nazi agents, and then sells the well back to them for two million—after a series of thrilling adventures, proving the power of Yankee ingenuity and Yankee money.

It's a glorious, high-action story, and with the four other tales it makes a wizard of this issue of

THE WIZARD

NOW ON SALE 10c A COPY

It was a relic from an Aztec tomb, presented to him by Captain Elvero, who found it."

Nodding, Ayres thumbed to the door. "Let's leave now. I want to talk to the doctor. I shall not betray your confidences, Alfred." As he reached the threshold he stopped to ask, "Where are the servants?"

"Servants?" Alfred was sad. "There are only two; cook and housekeeper. Mr. Mard, you must have known, was not wealthy."

"I hadn't known he was that strapped," said Ayres.

They went into the corridor, Alfred a step back of him. Captain Elvero, dark-complexioned, handsome, was outside Mr. Mard's door. Worry was etched in every line of his troubled countenance.

"Then—he's dead?" he inquired.

Ayres nodded. "How is Maria?"

"Dr. Leonard has given her a sedative, but she is still awake."

Misgivings ran riot in Bert Ayres. A sedative! Swiftly he went into the room. Dr. Leonard whirled, startled. His lips were drawn tight against his teeth. At the other side of the bed, tucking in the quilts, was a mousy sort of woman, the housekeeper.

Hastening to Ayres, the doctor said reproachfully in a subdued voice, "That was pretty cruel, breaking the news the way you did."

Ayres replied, "It was pretty cruel—murdering Mr. Mard. But about this sedative you've given Mrs. Mard—what was it?"

"Luminol extract," said Leonard. "But why . . . good Lord!" He grew rigid, not caring for the implication. "What are you thinking, colonel—"

"That the person who killed Philip Mard is still under this roof—and I mean to learn who it is before I call in the police!"

"I'll do what I can to help. Just name it. There are too many cross-purposes in this house."

"I know," Ayres told him. "I also heard that Phil Mard showed a marked improvement in his fight against hemophilia."

Shrewdly, the doctor narrowed his lids. "Yes—an improvement I can't understand. But his temper got worse. That was why I stayed indoors tonight. If I wasn't there to watch, he'd prowl around. Only today—this afternoon—he was down in the study and had to be carried back to bed by Alfred and Captain Elvero."

Ayres wrinkled his brow. "Why was he down there?"

"He refused to say. He had completed whatever it was, but when I located him he was weak and shaken."

Their conversation was suddenly interrupted by a plaintive call from Maria Mard. "José! José!"

Ayres nodded for the doctor to bring in Elvero. He wanted to hear and see what would occur when the two were together. He had no doubt that the tie between them had become stronger since Philip Mard had been confined to his bed. The doctor poked his head into the hall.

"Mrs. Mard wishes to see you, captain."

The man came in at once, glowered at Leonard, then swished by arrogantly. Maria seized his outstretched hand as he came to her bedside. Dark eyes explored his for some hint of the tragedy. He nodded in affirmation.

Pain scurried across her oval face, and for an instant fear shone in her eyes. She shivered visibly.

"You didn't—"

He dropped to his knees, buried his head on the quilt close to her

Continued on page 96

What is SPECIALIZED FICTION?

Eighty-five years ago the publishing house of Street & Smith was born. The men who founded this company blazed a trail for newsprint magazines—they pioneered—they did not enter a field, they created one.

They studied the reading public's needs and discovered that millions of readers were not having their reading tastes satisfied by the general magazines, for they never could tell when they would be given a particular type of story they especially liked to read. And for this great audience books were too expensive in the quantities they desired.

For these, Street & Smith created newsprint magazines each containing one type of story—so Specialized Fiction came into being.

While building these magazines Street & Smith editors chose genius unknown and helped it into print. Many of the great names of today saw their first published works appear in our magazines; for example:

George Barr McCutcheon
E. Phillips Oppenheim
Mary Roberts Rinehart
Albert Payson Terhune
Stewart Edward White
Theodore Dreiser
Rudyard Kipling
Booth Tarkington
Gouvenor Morris
A. Conan Doyle
O. Henry
Rupert Hughes

This process of helping authors climb the ladder of fame continued during the years down to the present hour—AND TODAY—

Steve Fisher, who just wrote "Typhoon" for Dorothy Lamour's current technicolor picture, has stories appearing regularly in CLUES, THE SHADOW, MYSTERY and ROMANTIC RANGE.

Erle Stanley Gardner—is known as the greatest American detective-fiction author—writes for DETECTIVE STORIES and CLUES.

Frank Gruber, winner of the Mary Roberts Rinehart mystery contest with "The French Key," this year's best seller in detective fiction, writes regularly for CLUES, MYSTERY and THE SHADOW.

Dick Moreland—"20 Mule Team," Wallace Beery's new movie, was made from one of his books. He writes regularly for LOVE STORY.

These four are but a few examples of how Street & Smith editors search today, as they did yesterday, for the best, by the best writers, to please all with their Specialized Fiction Magazines.

Are you thrilled by the hard-riding, swift decisions of life or death, flashing guns, the vigorous outdoor adventure of the Old West? Then you'll enjoy

WESTERN STORY   WILD WEST WEEKLY
WESTERN ADVENTURES

Do you enjoy solving problems? Like the radio quizzes? Does a murder mystery intrigue you? Then you'll be thrilled while reading

DETECTIVE STORY   MYSTERY   CLUES-DETECTIVE

Perhaps the romance of burning love pleases you? Or love in the modern note—as up-to-the-minute as tomorrow's news? Or love that flashes like the flaming six-gun of the West? Then you'll be thrilled with

LOVE STORY MAGAZINE   ROMANTIC RANGE

If you enjoy the icy feet of invisible lizards marching down your spine. If you enjoy busting open the silly dignity of this pompous old world, you'll more than enjoy

UNKNOWN

Possibly the crack of the bat—the thud of leather—the swiftness of silver skates—the ring of flying hoofs relaxes you most. Then you'll escape this everyday world with

SPORT STORY

What will our great grandchildren do—how will they act? When we think of the changes in the past hundred years, doesn't it envisage tomorrow's world as wonderful—terrible? The answer to thoughts like those you'll find in

ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION

The thrill-packed adventures of a modern specialist in crime prevention—the newest adventures in the world of finance—the adventures of a man-of-science who protects the unprotected. Do these please you? Then you'll enjoy

THE SHADOW   DOC SAVAGE   THE AVENGER
THE WHISPERER   THE WIZARD

All these magazines are published by

STREET & SMITH

PUBLICATIONS, INC.
79 Seventh Avenue   New York City

Continued from page 93

arm. "I swear I did not."

She exhaled in relief, then glanced sharply toward Ayres, who had the odd sensation that he was witnessing a rehearsed scene. The quick stab of her gaze had been an appraisal, he thought. She hoped to judge how their brief act had been received.

Ayres nudged the doctor. They quit the room, going out into the corridor. Alfred was waiting there, docilely, sheeplike.

"Go to your room, Alfred. I'll call when I want you," said Ayres. And as the secretary obeyed, Ayres conducted the doctor to the death room, there indicating the peculiar condition of the blood at the wound. "What would cause that, doctor?"

Leonard pursed his lips, uncertain. "Strange . . . very strange. It is inconsistent with anything I've seen in hemophilia cases. Yet, in a way, it explains Phil Mard's improvement."

"Wouldn't you say the blood shows normal coagulation?"

"I suppose it does," Leonard said hedgingly. "But to be absolutely positive, I'll test it. I have the necessary apparatus here."

"That's fine," agreed Ayres.

He watched the doctor use a wooden tongue-depressor to take the smear of the congealed blood. Carefully the doctor wrapped the result in a clean linen handkerchief. As he was about to leave Ayres detained him with another question.

"Has Mrs. Mard continued her interest in photography—of insects?"

Astonished at the seemingly unrelated query the doctor stared at him. "Yes, of course. It is her only diversion—with the exception of Captain Elvero. But what has that to do with . . . er . . . this?"

Ayres smiled wanly. "I'm afraid, doctor, you've been out of touch with advances in hemophilia therapeutics. But it explains why Philip Mard was afraid of being poisoned."

"You know—that!" Leonard's composure was shattered. "It was just a quirk of a distressed mentality."

"No, doctor," retaliated Ayres. "Phil and I once made a thorough study of all poisons. Evidently he had not forgotten symptoms."

The doctor gasped, "You mean that—"

"Yes, I mean that someone tried to murder Philip Mard by poisoning. It didn't work. So that dagger was used."

"It's . . . it's fantastic," muttered Leonard. "I can't credit it."

"You'll change your mind after you test that smear," replied Ayres confidently. "Hurry, doctor. Right now I'm going down to the basement to look around Mrs. Mard's photographic darkroom."

Gulping, Leonard asked, "You've got a line on the killer?"

"A very good line, doctor," said Ayres frigidly.

They separated. Ayres did not go directly to the basement. He stopped off and went into the study on the main floor. There he rummaged silently through the desk. At first nothing of importance to the murder arrested him. Frowning, he redoubled his efforts, certain that Philip Mard had found the motive for murder in that study.

When it seemed that his quest would end in failure, the clue he sought suddenly was revealed to him. His lips became grim, his lids drooped, but not enough to hide the glint in his eyes.

"No wonder Phil was weak and shaking when the doctor found him here," Ayres murmured to himself.

Without delay he hurried to the

basement and into the darkroom. Putting on the lights he saw that the place was equipped with the best in photography. Near the door was a tall supply cabinet, locked. Farther along were twin cedar tanks, half-filled with solutions. One contained water for washing prints; the other was a hypo bath for neutralizing developer. Trays set against the rack above the water tank were used to hold developers. On the other side of the room conveniently arranged was an auto-focus enlarger, and next to it was a contact printing machine.

Ayres, however, directed his attention to the shelf of chemicals above the sinks. He ran his gaze over the labels. His jaw muscles worked as he inched along to the rear of the darkroom. Where was the one chemical he had felt certain would be there?

Then he spied the bottle of crystals at the back of the shelf. With an exclamation he reached for it. But that was as far as he got just then.

There was a *click* of the electric switch, and the darkroom lived up to its name. He heard a door, thought he was being locked in. Lurching forward he banged his head into the closet, slamming shut its door.

Instantly he was aware that the killer had been waiting in the closet for him to appear. That was why the thing had been locked. As he strove to regain his footing, clear his head, he realized that the ruby photographic lights above the tanks were on. Simultaneous with that notion came a smashing impact to his temple.

He staggered, brain reeling. He flung out his arms to snare his assailant, missed. His fingertips scraped the man's clothes, sent a shock through Ayres. His foe wore a uniform.

Stumbling forward doggedly, attempting to pierce the fog induced by the clout to his temple Bert Ayres left himself vulnerable. His attacker had the advantage of being able to see in the ruby glow. Again something crashed onto Ayres' head. His knees buckled and he went down on his haunches.

He peered up, trying to see the man. A foot arced at him, caught him on the side of the jaw. It knocked him flat on the cement floor, beneath the enlarging table. Ayres grabbed for the foot, managed to claw at the cuff. But the leg was wrenched free and driven at his unprotected chin.

He sagged, common sense warning him to lie motionless. And he did. But it was to marshal his strength for another siege.

He heard the killer at the closet, crouched and started for him. A snarl of rage broke from the man. A form hurtled at Ayres and he ripped a right that was packed with power. It stopped the figure, toppling him. Ayres charged in.

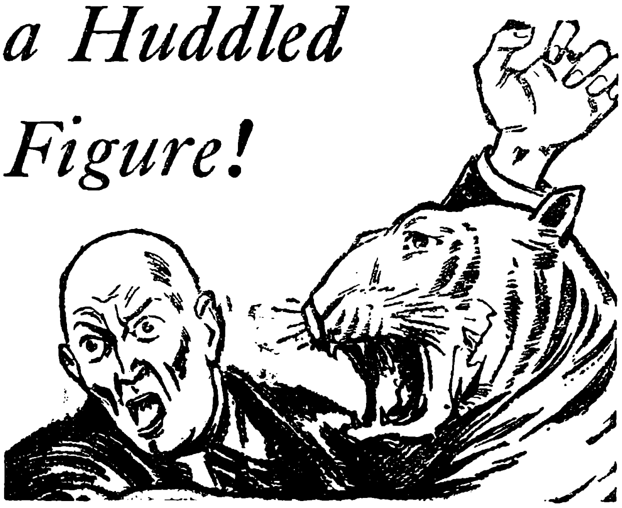
They tangled, fell to the floor. Ayres drove home a left and right. The man under him did not fight back now. Breathing heavily, still groggy from the head blows, Ayres rose. He put on the white light, gasped.

Dr. Leonard lay on the floor.

Bert Ayres blinked unbelievingly. The next second he was at the doctor's side, kneeling. Leonard was out cold—but not from any of the blows delivered by Bert Ayres. The back of the doctor's skull was crushed.

Rising, Bert ran to the closet. A crimson stain there substantiated his hunch. The doctor had been slugged elsewhere, probably in his room.

A Giant Bengal Tiger Stood Astride a Huddled Figure!



● Slowly the tiger's head lowered. It growled meaningly. It opened its jaws to begin a meal. The huddled figure was that of "Splendid" Sheester, one of New York's able lawyers who should have been in Sing Sing years ago.

But how did "Splendid" get in the tiger's cage? Why were the tigers and other fierce jungle animals on the Long Island estate of Dr. Stepan Howell? What caused Dr. Howell's sudden death? Why was "The Angel" and his gang of murderous killers on the Howell estate that night?

The case baffled the police. Only The Whisperer, always ready to fight fire with fire, could solve it. In real life The Whisperer was "Wildcat" Gordon, New York's young Police Commissioner who, when the problem was too deep, assumed the disguise of "The Whisperer," a denizen of the underworld, companion of crooks.

The exciting, strange, swift-moving stories of The Whisperer have been featured in THE SHADOW MAGAZINE. In answer to popular demand we now give this vital character a magazine of his own.

The WHISPERER

NOW ON SALE 10c A COPY

Then he had been carried to the darkroom, where at the proper instant he had been thrown at Ayres.

In the mix-up that followed, the real killer had succeeded in getting out of the room undetected. That was done with the sole purpose of diverting suspicion by making it appear that the doctor was the culprit. Ayres remembered the uniform his attacker had been wearing. Leonard was in civilian dress.

"This is one time the killer overplayed his hand," Ayres said.

He hastened up to the doctor's room, smiled in grim amusement as he scanned the report of the blood test. It ran half a page, written in ink. At the end of the report the word "negative" was printed instead of written.

Going to the medicine cabinet Ayres selected a purple solution marked, $KMnO_2$. He poured two drops of it on the printed word. Instantly the purple was decolorized. The word "negative" vanished, leaving blank paper. Ayres jerked his head, completely convinced he was on the right track.

Pocketing the report and the small bottle of purple liquid, he left. In the corridor outside his own room he encountered the captain, who apparently had been waiting for him.

"What's been happening, colonel?" the captain asked. "I thought I heard a rumpus in the basement a short time ago."

"Probably a rat, escaping," snapped Ayres. "Would you mind escorting Mrs. Mard to the study, captain? I'm sure she will go if you tell her I've learned who killed her husband."

"You've what—"

"Spotted the murderer," repeated Ayres simply. "You and Mrs. Mard will see for yourselves as soon as the police arrive."

With that Ayres spun on his heel.

He went quickly down the corridor to the left wing, rapped on Alfred's door. The secretary emerged, listened attentively to what Ayres had to say, eyes glistening with anticipation.

"Who did it?" he inquired breathlessly.

"You'll know soon enough," replied Ayres. "Now do as I say. Go to the study and phone the police from there. Ask for Inspector Manton and tell him I've trapped the killer of Philip Mard. That's all—but watch Captain Elvero and Mrs. Mard as you would your life."

So ingenious had the crime's framework been, that suspicion had been contrived to baffle the investigation at every point. Had it not been for the failure of the poison attempts, the actual murder would not have been solved so quickly. For the climax, though, Bert Ayres wanted official representation by Inspector Manton.

"I'll be at the front door to thwart any attempt by the murderer to escape," he finished telling Alfred.

Fifteen minutes later, Inspector Manton, stocky and gruff, led Lieutenant Clude and five plain-clothes men into the mansion. Ayres greeted Manton warmly and was introduced in turn to Clude and the others.

"What's this about Philip Mard being stabbed to death?" demanded the inspector. "It's not a gag, is it? The guy who phoned didn't give us much to go on."

"It's on the level, all right," Ayres convinced the inspector. "Phil was murdered not an hour and a half ago."

"Why weren't we called in at once, Ayres?" Clude wanted to know.

Manton silenced the lieutenant with a cold glare. "The colonel knows what he's doing. Well, Bert, what's on the card?"

"I want you to put the bracelets on the killer—"

Clude snorted, snapped his fingers. "Just like that, eh? Put the cuffs on the killer. How about finding him first?"

"I've saved you that hardship," retorted Ayres.

Clude sputtered, turning a lobster-red in confusion. Manton smirked at him, showing no mercy. "Serves you right, Clude," he said. "Now, Bert, let's get on with this."

An officer was left to guard the front door. Ayres showed the police the body of the dead explorer, recited everything that had occurred, then took them to the darkroom and finally to the doctor's room. Two of the policemen meanwhile carried the physician's body to the main floor in preparation for its removal to the morgue. All the while Bert Ayres kept up a running account of what he had done.

Yet, when they were ushered into the study to meet the three inmates, neither Clude, the inspector, nor any of the other detectives could pick out the killer.

As he presented Maria Mard, Captain Elvero and Alfred to the police, Bert Ayres declared, "I've explained everything that's occurred from the time Philip Mard phoned me until I asked Alfred to notify the authorities."

Ashen and distraught by the ordeal, Maria Mard held herself as regally as she could. Captain Elvero, self-conscious, fidgeted nervously under the barrage of eyes. Alfred sought the colonel's eyes, as though to inquire, "Which one?"

"Where's the doctor?" suddenly asked Maria.

"The murderer has seen that the doctor would not be here."

She retreated, braced herself, but had to seek the refuge of the yawning chair at her side. The men remained standing, anxious for Ayres to begin his narrative.

"The killer knew it was imperative to keep Philip Mard on the deathbed. To make certain of this, the murderer sought a poison which would point suspicion to another. Such a poison was found in the crystals of oxalic acid; a most deadly poison. By small doses the killer hoped to finish off Phil Mard in time. To have administered a large dose would have been folly because its taste would have prevented it from being taken. But here's the amazing thing—*instead of the poison bringing about death, it made the sick man healthier than ever!*"

"How's that?" asked Manton dubiously.

"Until recently," Ayres resumed, "hemophilia was believed impossible to cure. But tests with oxalic acid have showed cases where improvement was so marked it was astonishing. The acid has the peculiar property to cause the coagulation of blood. With this occuring in Philip Mard, the killer had to do something to offset it. The opportunity came tonight when Phil, having learned the motive for the poison attempts, phoned me. He was stabbed before he could talk much."

Clude put in, "You guessed about the oxalic acid from the condition of the blood at the wound, but why'd the killer pick oxalic acid when there are other poisons used in photography?"

"The answer is," said Ayres, "that the killer knew more about oxalic acid than any of the other chemicals. You see, the murderer had been using those crystals for a long time previous to . . . catch him!"

A knot of men milled at the door. When they unscrambled the struggling figure of Alfred Hernon was shoved forward by strong arms. Ayres eyed him contemptuously.

"You thought you could get away with murder, Alfred," he said, wagging his head. "When you opened the door for me tonight I knew you were a bit prompt—because I didn't ring the bell. Later, when you reluctantly admitted that everyone had a motive for killing Philip Mard, I felt you were doing it for your own welfare."

"But that's hardly enough to arrest a man on," Clude said irately. "We've got to have better proof."

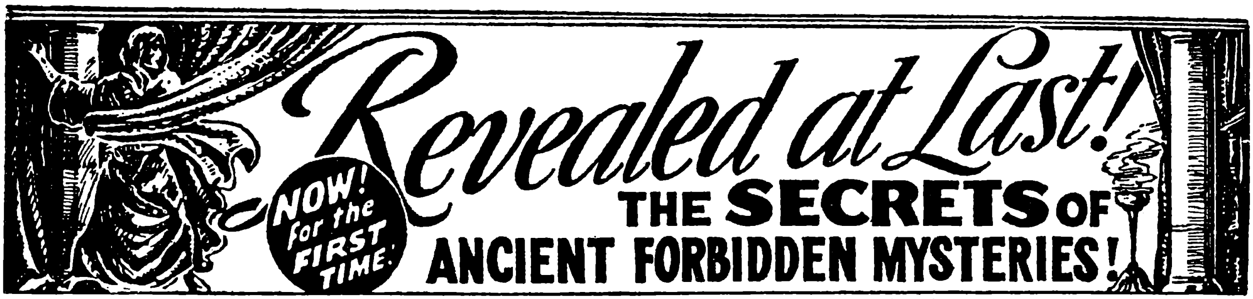
"You'll get it," Ayres barked at him. He went to the desk, took out a ledger and thumbed through it until he found a few pages of expenditures. "I said Alfred had used oxalic acid previously and I was correct. Look closely, inspector. See that glaze—it is a dried solution of oxalic acid. But to test it I've got some potassium permanganate—this purple solution. It loses its purple color when it comes into chemical association with oxalic acid. Watch!"

He applied a bit of the solution to the glazed surface. Instantly the solution became colorless.

"That's why Philip Mard was killed," said Ayres. "For years Alfred here has been stealing money from Mr. Mard's reserve funds. Not until the active accounts were depleted and Phil was about to call upon his reserve savings did Alfred become frightened."

Captain Elvero made a throaty sound to draw attention. "Why did he kill the doctor?"

"For the same reason he tried to kill me twice," declared Ayres crisply. "He feared we would expose him. Why, he wore one of

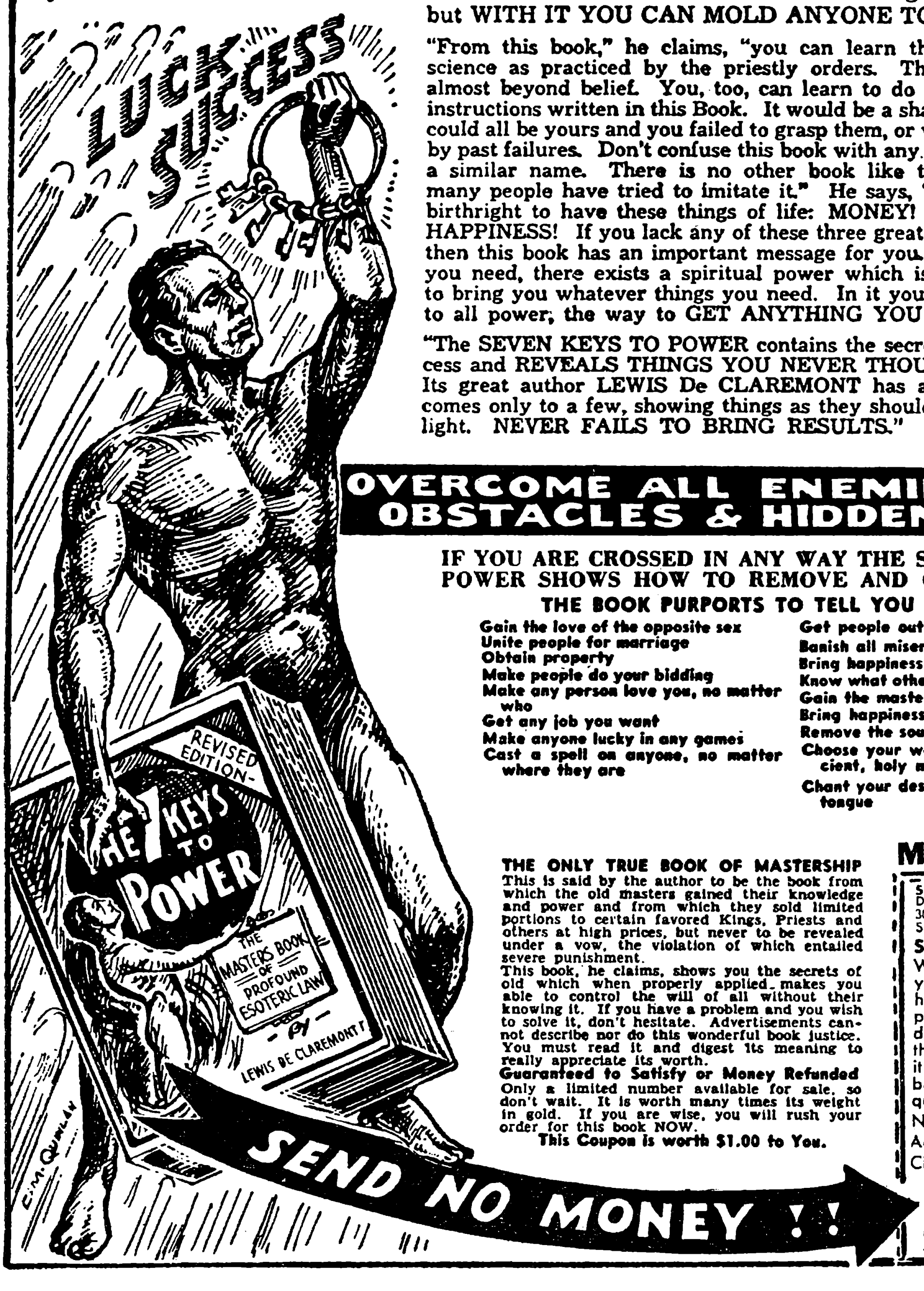


NOW! for the FIRST TIME

Revealed at Last! THE SECRETS OF ANCIENT FORBIDDEN MYSTERIES!

THE VOW OF SILENCE IS BROKEN!

THE 7 KEYS TO POWER TEACHES YOU ALL THE MYSTERIES OF LIFE from the cradle to the grave—and beyond. It tells you the particular day and hour to do anything you desire, whether it be to the light of the moon, sun, or in total darkness, in accordance with Ancient Teachings. We make no claims ourselves, but the author, Lewis de Claremont, says: "The power to get what you want revealed at last, for the first time since the dawn of creation. The very same power which the ancient Chaldeans, Cuthic Priests, Egyptians, Babylonians and Sumerians used is at our disposal today." He says: "Follow the simple directions and you can do anything you desire. No one can tell how these master forces are used without knowing about this book, but WITH IT YOU CAN MOLD ANYONE TO YOUR WILL."



"From this book," he claims, "you can learn the arts of an old science as practiced by the priestly orders. Their marvels were almost beyond belief. You, too, can learn to do them all with the instructions written in this Book. It would be a shame if these things could all be yours and you failed to grasp them, or were to be blinded by past failures. Don't confuse this book with any other book having a similar name. There is no other book like this one, although many people have tried to imitate it." He says, "It is every man's birthright to have these things of life: MONEY! GOOD HEALTH! HAPPINESS! If you lack any of these three great necessities of life, then this book has an important message for you. No matter what you need, there exists a spiritual power which is abundantly able to bring you whatever things you need. In it you can find the way to all power, the way to GET ANYTHING YOU WANT.

"The SEVEN KEYS TO POWER contains the secret of all real success and REVEALS THINGS YOU NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE. Its great author LEWIS De CLAREMONT has a rare gift which comes only to a few, showing things as they should be in their true light. NEVER FAILS TO BRING RESULTS."

RUSH THIS COUPON NOW!

OVERCOME ALL ENEMIES!! OBSTACLES & HIDDEN FEARS!

IF YOU ARE CROSSED IN ANY WAY THE SEVEN KEYS TO POWER SHOWS HOW TO REMOVE AND CAST IT BACK!

THE BOOK PURPORTS TO TELL YOU HOW TO—

Gain the love of the opposite sex
Unite people for marriage
Obtain property
Make people do your bidding
Make any person love you, no matter who
Get any job you want
Make anyone lucky in any games
Cast a spell on anyone, no matter where they are
Get people out of law suits, courts.
Banish all misery
Bring happiness to broken lives
Know what others are doing
Gain the mastery of all things
Bring happiness to broken homes
Remove the source of unhappiness
Choose your words according to ancient, holy methods
Chant your desires in the silent tongue

THE ONLY TRUE BOOK OF MASTERSHIP

This is said by the author to be the book from which the old masters gained their knowledge and power and from which they sold limited portions to certain favored Kings, Priests and others at high prices, but never to be revealed under a vow, the violation of which entailed severe punishment.

This book, he claims, shows you the secrets of old which when properly applied makes you able to control the will of all without their knowing it. If you have a problem and you wish to solve it, don't hesitate. Advertisements cannot describe nor do this wonderful book justice. You must read it and digest its meaning to really appreciate its worth.

Guaranteed to Satisfy or Money Refunded

Only a limited number available for sale, so don't wait. It is worth many times its weight in gold. If you are wise, you will rush your order for this book NOW.

This Coupon is worth $1.00 to You.

MAIL AT ONCE

SUCCESS BOOK CO.
Dept. SS
30 Park Row
Stamford, Conn.

ONLY $1.

SEND NO MONEY

When Postman delivers your Book deposit with him $1.00 plus a few pennies only for Ten days—if satisfied keep the Book—if not return it and your deposit will be refunded in full no questions asked.

Name..............................
Address..............................
City.................State..........

P. S. We will be glad to ship your order on approval — But if you wish to enclose a dollar bill or Money Order we will also send you a Genuine MYSTIC POWER Coin of Luck Absolutely FREE!

your uniforms tonight, captain, to make it appear as if you were the killer."

"But it wouldn't have fitted him—he's smaller than I am."

"True enough," the colonel conceded. "It didn't fit him. He turned up the trouser bottoms, made cuffs of them. During my fight with him in the darkroom I got my hands on one of the cuffs. It was something I couldn't figure out at the time. I knew it was a uniform, but I had never seen any of yours with cuffs."

"It's all a pack of lies," cried Alfred hysterically. "You haven't a shred of evidence against me."

Inspector Manton's clouded face showed that he wasn't entirely satisfied. "It's all circumstantial, Bert," he said. "Haven't you anything more concrete to offer?"

"One thing," Ayres replied swiftly.

He took the doctor's blood report from his pocket, explained what he had done with it.

"According to the test Leonard made, the result should have been *positive*, not negative as was printed there. One assumption can be deduced from that. The doctor had written the word 'positive' but Alfred used oxalic acid to eradicate it, then printed 'negative' in its place. If that assumption is correct, some of the acid must still be on Alfred's fingers."

Inspector Manton beamed.

"I knew you'd have it, Bert. Here, you men," he barked at his subordinates, "spread out Alfred's hands so Colonel Ayres can put some of the potassium permanganate solution on the fingers."

The secretary fought to prevent it. But he was held in powerful grips. Expertly Bert Ayres dabbed the purple solution on the secretary's hands. Almost immediately the thumb and forefinger of the right hand were bleached colorless.

"That's that," said Ayres quietly. "The permanganate took the oxalic acid off your hands, Alfred. But it'll require the electric chair to cleanse you of the blood that's on them."

With a bow to Maria, a nod to the captain, Colonel Ayres took his leave. He had avenged his friend's murder.

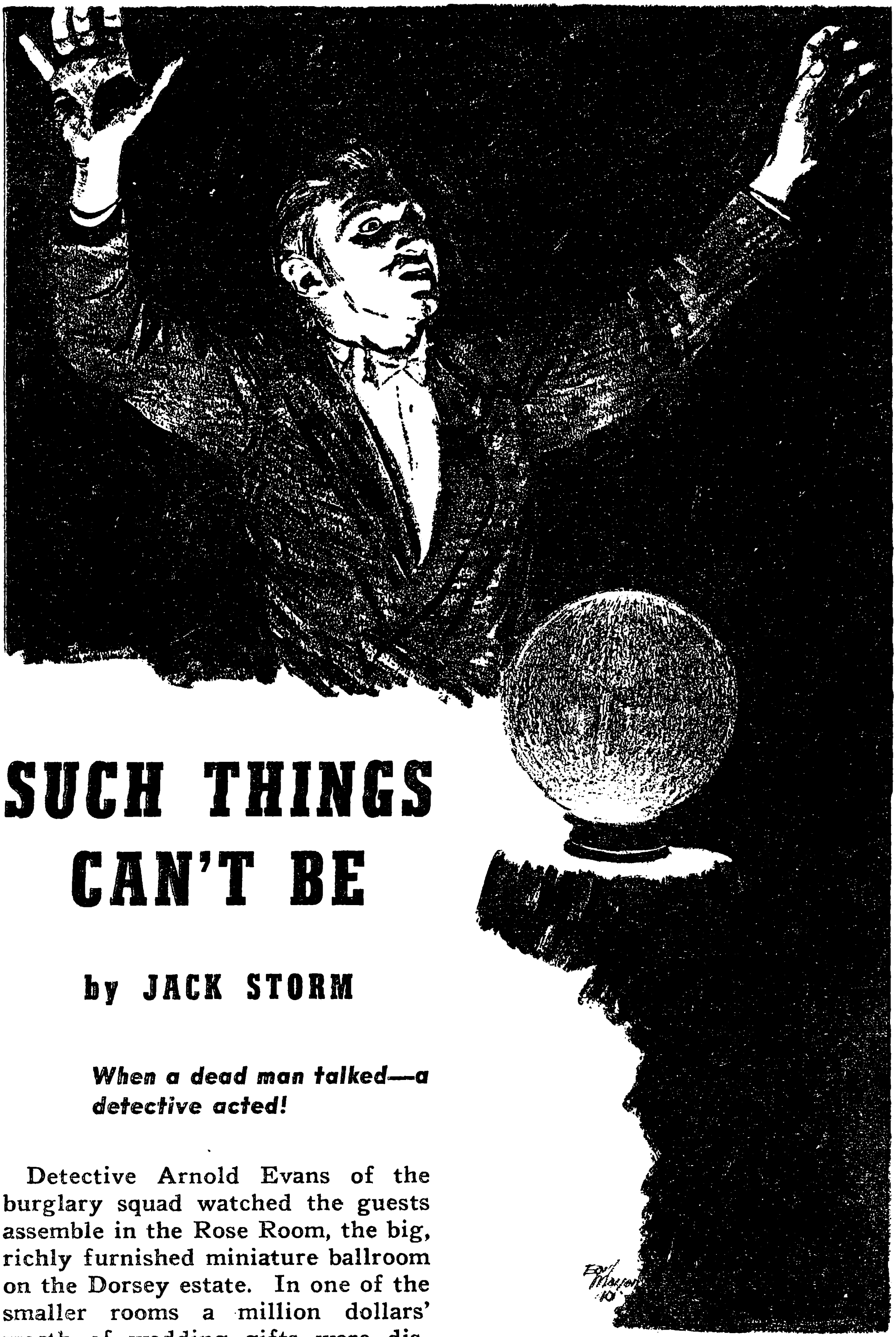
THE END.

THE SHADOW

When crime becomes rampant, then does The Shadow strike! A living being of the darkness, he comes and goes unseen. Always, his objective is the stamping out of supercrime. Dying gangsters expire with the name of The Shadow upon their blood-flecked lips. Hordes of mobsmen have felt The Shadow's wrath. A man garbed in black, his face unseen beneath the turned-down brim of a slouch hat—that is the spectral form that all evil men fear; that is THE SHADOW. Read of the thrilling exploits of this unusual being in

THE Shadow

Twice a Month—Ten Cents a Copy At All Newsstands



SUCH THINGS CAN'T BE

by JACK STORM

When a dead man talked—a detective acted!

Detective Arnold Evans of the burglary squad watched the guests assemble in the Rose Room, the big, richly furnished miniature ballroom on the Dorsey estate. In one of the smaller rooms a million dollars' worth of wedding gifts were displayed. It was the most fashionable wedding in years, and the most lavish. The bride, pretty June Dorsey—Gale now, for the ceremony was completed—walked between her husband and her brother through the crowd.

In one corner of the room was a tent of striped canvas. Detective Evans kept his eyes on it, for the man inside had become the most interesting object at the affair. For Evans anyway. There was something familiar about the man who purported to be a crystal gazer. He had a reputation, and his appearance here must have cost June Gale's brother a small fortune. He was known as The Great Jacquin and he wore a neatly trimmed goatee and waxed mustache. Jacquin didn't resort to the mystically designed robes usually chosen by those in his profession. He wore a well-cut dress suit.

They were getting ready to watch his act now. Lights were dimmed until only blue bulbs illuminated the room. Evans didn't like this, and he had so expressed himself.

"But who would try to invade the house?" Bill Dorsey demanded in good humor. "We have private detectives spread all over the estate. Two of your best men guard the presents and you, Evans—why, you're known for the way you handle affairs like this. Dimming the lights won't mean a thing."

Still, Evans didn't like it. A million dollars' worth of gifts, most of them small and easily transportable, were too much of a target for crooks and the whole nation knew about them.

The front of the tent was raised, like a curtain, to reveal Jacquin bowing solemnly and asking for volunteers. His act was good. By the expression on the faces of those who faced the crystal, Evans realized that Jacquin was putting over some pretty good answers to their questions. Then Evans' eyes narrowed. In this weird light he had a perfect view of Jacquin's profile.

Evans made his unobtrusive way closer to the tent until he could see a wide scar glistening beneath the black goatee. Something clicked in Evans' mind. His thoughts went back five years. Jacquin was Frenchy DuBois, as clever a jewel thief as police records could show. Evans had arrested him—the first time Frenchy had ever been thrown into jail. The sentence was stiff, for Frenchy had stolen gems worth a small fortune. In prison, he had slit his own throat and lingered on the brink of death for days. Something happened to him after that. He changed from a dangerous, crafty prisoner to a man who was almost a saint.

"He fooled the board of parole," Evans told himself bitterly. "Less than a year out of prison, and he's back to his old tricks."

Half an hour went by while Evans listened to The Great Jacquin give his prophecies, his amazingly accurate answers to involved questions and his descriptions of the past life of those who sat before the glowing crystal.

Evans glanced out of a window into the darkness of the big estate surrounding the house. He caught the wink of a flashlight, and frowned. The private detectives planted outside had orders to keep their presence a secret. Then, so suddenly that Evans could do nothing about it, six men rushed into the room. Four of them held submachine guns, two gripped an automatic in each hand. Windows crashed in, and more men thrust weapons into the room, covering the crowd.

Evans' hand streaked for his service pistol. The window beside him smashed and the muzzle of a machine gun centered on his chest.

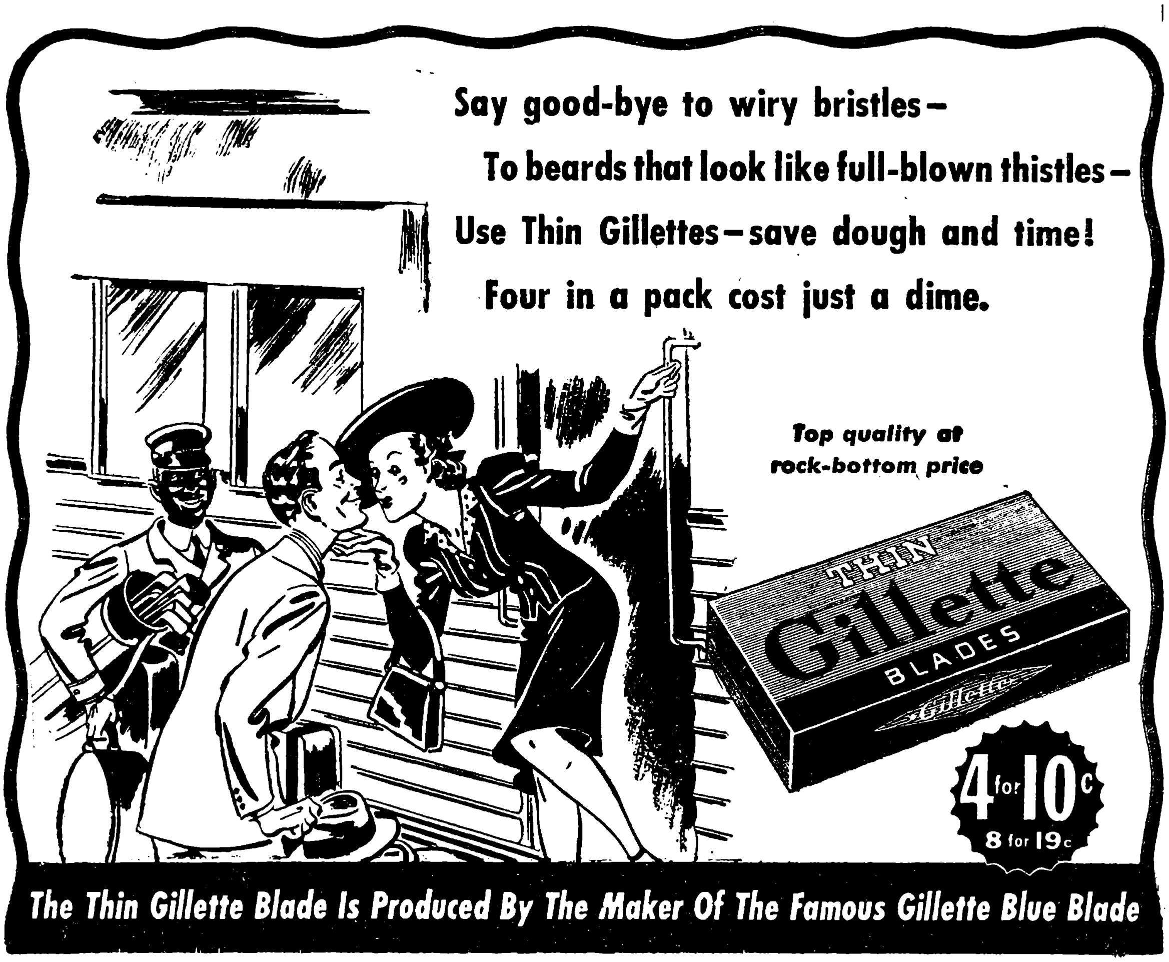
"Don't try it, copper!" someone warned. "I'd rather plug you than anybody else in this joint. Lift 'em!"

Evans swore softly and obeyed. He backed up a little so that by sweeping his right arm down he might seize the Tommy-gun before it would spit death. All he needed was a break, something to happen by which the gunner's attention might be diverted for a fraction of a second. Through Evans' brain worked the thought that The Great Jacquin, alias Frenchy DuBois, was behind it all. Only a mind as crafty as his could have planned an affair of these proportions.

Evans realized that the guards outside had been well taken care of. He guessed that there were no less than a dozen armed bandits in the group. Three of them were heading toward the room where the gifts were kept. One kicked the door open. There were several quick shots, and then those deadly guns cut loose. Evans saw Murphy, a man he had assigned to guard the gifts, stagger out of the room, double up and pitch face down on the floor. A thin stream of blood ran from beneath his body and glistened in the blue light.

The bandits were all well masked. One, who wore a white mask that contrasted with the black one of his men, seemed to be in charge. He waved the rifle he held and forced everyone back against the walls.

"We're taking the stuff," he an-


Say good-bye to wiry bristles–
To beards that look like full-blown thistles–
Use Thin Gillettes–save dough and time!
Four in a pack cost just a dime.
Top quality at rock-bottom price
THIN Gillette BLADES
Gillette
4 for 10c
8 for 19c
The Thin Gillette Blade Is Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade

nounced belligerently. "Then we strip you suckers of everything you got. I'm warning you—we want wallets, loose cash and every damn ring, necklace and bracelet in the bunch. The first sap who tries to hide anything gets rubbed out!"

Four of the bandits were busy carting the gifts out of the house. They made three trips while Evans felt his whole body become saturated with sweat. He watched Jacquin narrowly, but the crystal gazer simply sat very erect in his chair and kept his hands high. The glow from within the crystal had mysteriously died out.

Very unexpectedly, the white-masked leader reached out and seized June Gale's arm. He dragged her close and held her as a shield. Her face was as starkly white as her wedding gown.

"One move—and this dame gets it!" the bandit shouted. "Maybe that'll make you mugs listen to reason."

Evans saw June's brother start slowly edging toward a table on which several metal statues were resting. Evans wanted to yell a warning—to tell him not to try it. But if he did, Bill Dorsey would be shot down before he could move an inch.

Dorsey made a sudden grab for one of the statues, raised it and headed toward the white-masked leader. He was bringing his weapon down when one of the other thugs opened fire. Evans shuddered as he watched the heavy machine-gun bullet smash into Dorsey's chest. The man dropped the statue, wheeled halfway around and seemed to be pleading with the others to do something. Then he folded up and slid to the floor.

While this went on, Evans looked down and saw that the gunman who covered him had shifted the muzzle of his weapon slightly and probably was very busy watching the murder, Evans brought down his right hand, grabbed the rifle barrel and gave it a savage yank. The speed with which he accomplished this and the surprise of the move made the gunman lose his grip on the weapon.

Evans spun around, raising the gun as he did so. Four of the thugs were running toward him. The guests, terrorized and some screaming in fear, were flat against the side walls so that Evans could open fire without the risk of hitting any innocent people. The gun bucked in his hand. Two of the thugs went down. Another dropped his gun and grabbed a wounded thigh. The fourth wheeled and raced back. Evans was still shooting, but the thugs had ducked out of the room quickly. A gun blazed from one of the windows. Evans aimed at it, sent a burst through the glass and heard a man screech in agony. The only bandit left in the room now was the white-masked leader and he kept the bride before him as a shield. With only one hand free he couldn't operate his rifle, but he shouted a threat.

"You can't plug me without knocking off the dame. Drop that gun, copper!"

But Evans didn't drop it. Instead he charged down the room, gun ready for the first opportunity in which he might wipe out this thug. Several members of the wedding party rushed forward and scooped up the guns dropped by the wounded and dead bandits. They didn't know much about marksmanship, but they sent plenty of slugs raining through the windows.

The bandits outside fled. The leader backed out of the room, still holding his human shield. He quickly passed the girl to one of his men, raised his gun and fired a burst. One slug struck the bricks of a huge fireplace, ricocheted and Evans felt a mighty blow against his forehead. He reeled, went down on one knee and blazed away at the door. Then he toppled over.

He never completely lost consciousness, but he couldn't help himself much when two men carried him over to a davenport and laid him down. Someone wiped the blood from his scalp wound. Someone else forced brandy down his throat. The fiery liquor brought his wits back. He sat up and saw that the man with the brandy glass was Jacquin.

"They got away?" Evans asked as he rose slowly. "They took the girl with them?"

Jacquin nodded. "They forced her into one of their cars and drove off. You killed two of the men. Three others are badly wounded. We removed their masks. They are members of Slip Bagley's gang of waterfront thieves. I know many of them. I—"

"How do you know them?" Evans demanded coldly. "When did you come into contact with rats of that breed?"

Jacquin flushed. "You know that, Evans, just as well as I do. You can't spend five years in prison without meeting those kind. Please—don't say anything to the others now. I . . . I feel almost as though I'm responsible. Those blue lights and the dimming of the whole room was my idea. Just give me a break."

"Stick around," Evans said softly. "Very close, Frenchy, because if I miss you, I'll start looking—with a gun. How is Bill Dorsey?"

Jacquin shook his head. "At least ten bullets smashed through his chest. He was dead before he landed on the floor. They've put him on one of the settees. Evans, you've got to believe me. I had no part in this. I'm going straight. I swear it."

"Straight?" Evans smiled crookedly and massaged the lump on his head. "Working an old racket like crystal gazing? I'm no sap, Frenchy. Stick around—like I told you."

Evans hurried toward the phone. He guessed that about fifteen minutes had elapsed since the bandits fled. Evans wanted an open wire to headquarters for quick action once he made the wounded bandits talk. There was something much more precious than a million dollars' worth of wedding gifts at stake now. Every moment that June Gale was in the hands of those men brought her closer to death.

As Evans reached for the phone, it rang. He lifted the receiver.

"Lemme talk to Evans—the dick in charge," someone said.

"Go ahead—this is Evans," the detective encouraged.

"Listen, wise guy, if you hadn't started things, we'd have cleaned up. You got five of my boys. Maybe a couple are dead, but some must be alive. It ain't necessary to make 'em talk. I'm Slip Bagley, and one of the boys up there is my brother. Now, listen, copper, we got the dame—see? We got her set up in a place you'll never find. If you want her alive, turn my boys loose—all of 'em that ain't dead. Give 'em a car."

"You louse!" Evans barked. "Do you think I believe you? If I turned those rats loose, you'd kill the girl, anyhow. You've got her. I've got your brother, and I hope he's not one of the stiffs. It won't be pleasant reading about the way he's marched to the chair, Slip. And mark this—you'll travel the same route!"

"Wait a minute, copper," Slip Bagley yelled frantically. "I got proof the dame is O. K., and if you do like I say, she'll live. What do I care about her when you got my brother? I'm putting a friend of yours on the wire. There's a roscoe planted right against his skull so don't expect him to answer questions. He knows just what to say. It's Sergeant Monohan of the harbor cops."

A strained voice reached Evans. He recognized it instantly. Monohan was one of his best friends.

"He's right," Monohan said. "The girl is tied up. I can't tell you where, but she can't get loose. At midnight she'll be dead, Evans. That's the truth. She'll die slowly, and there's nothing you or anyone else can do about it. Slip hasn't got her now, but he's figured out a way so she'll die unless you do as he says!"

Evans gripped the phone until his knuckles shone white. Slip Bagley's voice replaced Monohan's.

"That's the set-up, copper. Nobody on the outside even knows about the stick-up. The joint is so exclusive there ain't nobody living for almost a mile around. Turn the boys loose and when I see them O. K., I'll let Monohan go. He knows how to save the dame."

Evans groaned as he dropped the instrument back onto its cradle. Jacquin touched Evans' arm.

"The girl is in danger. You must turn these men loose. That's what he said, isn't it?"

Evans glared at the crystal gazer. "You developed some pretty good ears in prison, Frenchy. And don't get me wrong—I still think there's a chance you were in on this. That crystal-gazing stuff! A swell cover-up to get an advance man into a place like this."

Jacquin closed his eyes wearily. "I couldn't convince you crystal gazing is on the level, because it isn't, of course. It's just a harmless way of making a living. I know all about the people before I show up. I get a guest list and study it. That's how I can answer all their questions. But you've got to believe I wasn't mixed up in the job. Listen, Evans, I tried to kill myself in prison. I came very close to dying, and something happened to me. I was a changed man. I swear it. It—was almost as though I had died and then came back. Sometimes I even think I can contact the dead—like I did in prison when they were pumping blood into my veins."

Evans scowled. "Mularkey, and I haven't time to listen to that kind of stuff. What I'm trying to figure out is this: If I let Bagley's brother go, will he have June killed anyway? Can I afford to take the chance? But any way you look at it, Frenchy, things are not so hot for you. A guy with your record won't have much of a defense—and this time it's a murder rap."

Jacquin, the all-knower, had no answer to that. Both men walked slowly toward the tent. Evans bent over Bill Dorsey's blood-smeared body and sighed. Guests returned from searching the estate. The outside guards had been all knocked cold with chloroform and thrown into a garden house. The two detectives assigned to guard the gifts were dead. Three murders, and Evans had to let some of the killers go free to save the life of a girl. If he was certain that Bagley would prevent her death, he'd have gone through with it instantly, but Bagley was a double-crossing rat, capable of any crime on the books. The life of a girl meant no more to him than the existence of a cockroach on some dirty tramp steamer.

Evans saw Jacquin slowly sitting down behind his table. He walked over and stood beside him.

“Frenchy—so far I haven't exposed you as an ex-con and a slippery crook. If you know what Bagley did with that girl, I'll trade you a twenty-four-hour head start for the information.”

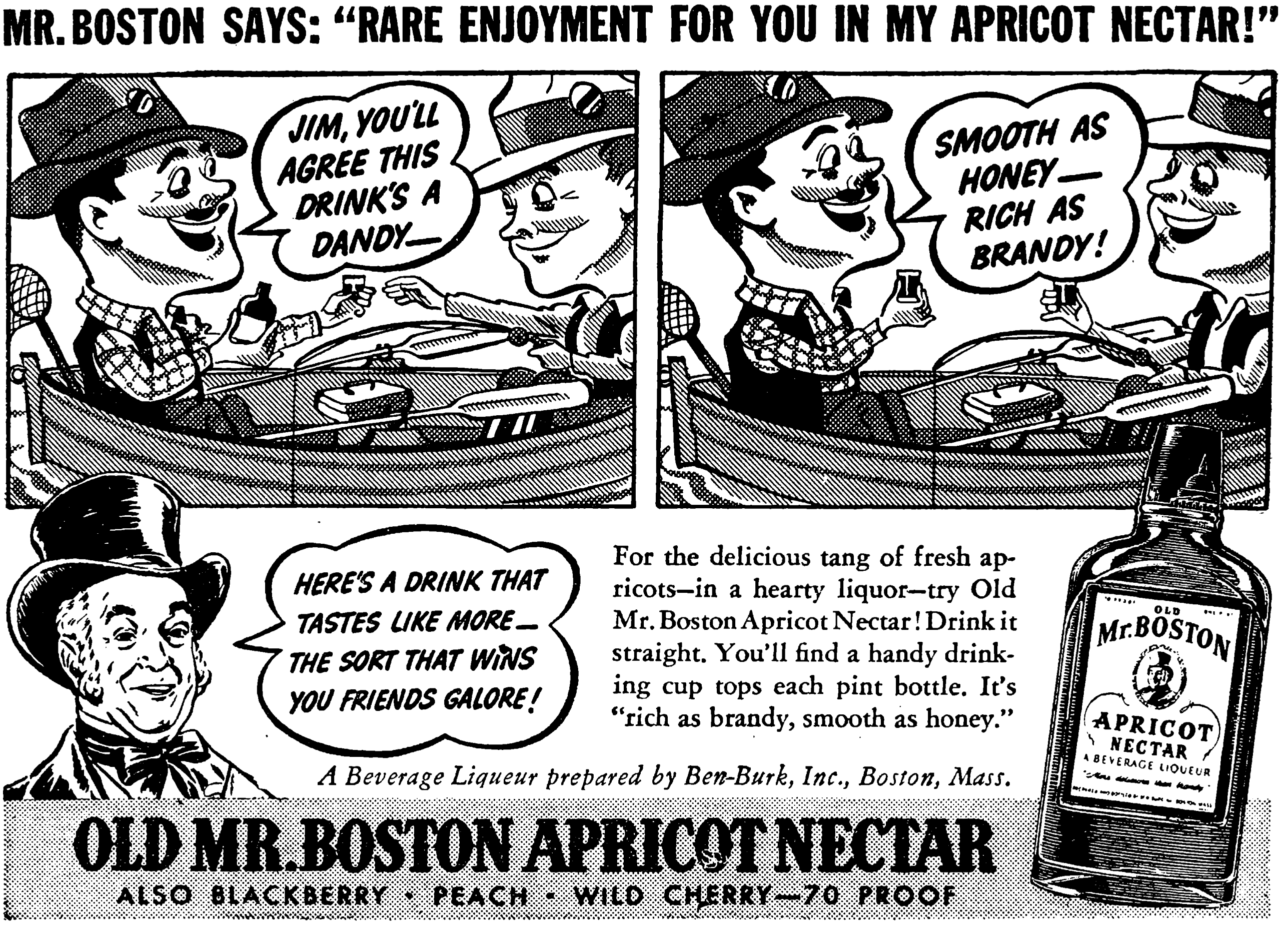
“I don't know,” Jacquin mumbled. “I wasn't in on this job. I'm no killer. If I could bring those rats to justice— Evans—look! Dorsey! His arm moved!”

Evans jerked his service pistol free and pressed it against Jacquin's back before he turned. A hush had fallen over those in the room. Bill Dorsey's right arm, which had been gently placed on his chest, was sliding off. It should have dropped limply, but instead it became stiff. His thumb and three fingers clenched, but the index finger pointed—straight at Jacquin.

The crystal gazer saw it and beads of sweat came out on his forehead. His eyes closed tightly and he shivered. Then he lifted both hands and placed them on the crystal, stroking it as he might a cat. At the same time he murmured indistinguishable words.

Evans saw the crystal slowly change color, as if from some inner glow. Jacquin's hands moved away. The crystal gazer bent down. His voice came in a hoarse whisper.

“Something is taking shape in the



MR. BOSTON SAYS: “RARE ENJOYMENT FOR YOU IN MY APRICOT NECTAR!”

JIM, YOU'LL AGREE THIS DRINK'S A DANDY—
SMOOTH AS HONEY— RICH AS BRANDY!
HERE'S A DRINK THAT TASTES LIKE MORE— THE SORT THAT WINS YOU FRIENDS GALORE!
OLD Mr. BOSTON APRICOT NECTAR A BEVERAGE LIQUEUR

For the delicious tang of fresh apricots—in a hearty liquor—try Old Mr. Boston Apricot Nectar! Drink it straight. You'll find a handy drinking cup tops each pint bottle. It's “rich as brandy, smooth as honey.”

A Beverage Liqueur prepared by Ben-Burk, Inc., Boston, Mass.

OLD MR. BOSTON APRICOT NECTAR

ALSO BLACKBERRY • PEACH • WILD CHERRY—70 PROOF

Home-Study
Business Training

Your opportunity will never be bigger than your preparation. Prepare now and reap the rewards of early success. Free 64-Page Books Tell How. Write NOW for book you want, or mail coupon with your name, present position and address in margin today.

☐ Higher Accountancy
☐ Mod. Salesmanship
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Law: Degree of LL. B.
☐ Commercial Law
☐ Industrial Mgm't
☐ Business Mgm't
☐ Business Corres.
☐ Expert Bookkeeping
☐ C. P. A. Coaching
☐ Effective Speaking
☐ Stenotypy

LaSalle Extension University
Dept. 865-R A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION Chicago

New! Lifelike! **PHOTO-RINGS**

NEWEST SENSATION! Send any snapshot or photo and we'll reproduce it in this beautiful onyx-like ring.

Special **45c** (Hand-painted 10c extra)

Indestructible! Waterproof!

Enclose strip of paper for ring size. Pay postman plus a few cents postage. If you send cash we pay postage. REX PHOTO RING CO., Dept.SS-3 P.O. Box 14, Cincinnati, O. (Canadians Send Money Orders)

ITCH STOPPED *in a Jiffy* -or Money Back

For quick relief from itching of eczema, pimples, athlete's foot, scales, scabies, rashes and other externally caused skin troubles, use world-famous, cooling, antiseptic, liquid D. D. D. Prescription. Greaseless, stainless. Soothes irritation and quickly stops the most intense itching. 35c trial bottle proves it, or money back. Ask your druggist today for **D. D. D. PRESCRIPTION.**

SELL FOOD

Samples on Trial Plan

Everybody must buy food. Own a steady neighborhood route. Full or part time. Make money at once and all year 'round. Complete Outfit, including large assortment of regular full size products—worth $6.00—on amazing trial plan. No experience needed. Handle nationally known line 200 guaranteed home necessities; fast sellers; steady repeaters. Liberal credit plan. Old reliable company. Write quick for my Free Offer.

E. J. MILLS
1849 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

HOW TO Write Stories that SELL

Mrs. Grace Blanchard had an IDEA for a story. We criticized her story, gave it a new title and told her WHERE TO SEND IT. She got a substantial check THE FIRST TIME OUT. That is a THRILL many of our graduates have each month. Let 22 years of experience guide YOU. Endorsed by Jack London. "THE ART OF STORY WRITING" **FREE BOOKLET** with explanation of our personal criticism and manuscript sales service. No obligations. Write!

HOOSIER INSTITUTE, Room 128, Hoosier Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

SONGWRITERS

A MINIMUM OF **$1,000.00** ADVANCE ROYALTIES

and **GUARANTEED PUBLICATION**

FOR ACCEPTED LYRICS, MELODIES, OR YOUR OWN COMPLETE SONGS!

For Full Details Write to:
SONG HIT GUILD Inc.
DEPT. SS
1619 B'way, N. Y. C.

crystal. Something human and inhuman. The face of a dead man! The face of Bill Dorsey, whose body lies on the settee not a dozen yards away. The lips are moving, but I hear no words. Now the scene is fading. . . . But wait—there is something else. Waves lapping at thick wooden piles sunk into the water. June Gale is tied to one of these. She's tied to a piling beneath a pier, and the tide is rising."

Evans found himself saying in a low voice, "Frenchy—how did you do this? Which pier is it? She won't last more than another half-hour. It's time for the tide to come in. Frenchy—make that damned thing glow again. Make it glow, do you hear me?"

He whirled angrily toward the crystal gazer, but Jacquin seemed as limp as Bill Dorsey. His head was thrown back, his eyes were tightly shut and his mouth was slightly agape. The hideous pallor of his skin was made even more ghostly by the weird blue lighting. Then his lips moved, sluggishly. A voice came from his throat. Not the voice of The Great Jacquin. Not that! It was the mellow, calm voice of Bill Dorsey—*who was dead!*

"Pier 30, North River," the voice said, and then Jacquin shivered violently and opened his eyes.

Evans grabbed his wrist. "I don't know what happened. I don't even give a damn, but you and I are going to Pier 30. Everybody else stay right where you are. Don't notify headquarters. Don't do anything! Watch the prisoners!"

He pulled Jacquin after him, rushed out of the house and piled into a police squad car parked around in back. The siren was whining as he rolled out of the driveway.

Jacquin sat very quietly, more like a dead man than a living one. Evans drove like furies from hell. A radio car swerved around and followed. Evans darted through traffic on his trip across town. Then the North River glistened dully in the night. Evans rolled to the end of Pier 30, an abandoned, half-rotten wharf that led well out over the river. He leaped out of the car, dropped flat at the edge of the pier and turned the ray of his flashlight on. He swept one section of pilings and saw nothing. He shifted the ray. It centered on June Gale. Evans threw the flash onto the pier and without a second's hesitation, slid off and into the chilly water. He swam over to where the girl was tied up. The water was up to her throat now. Ten minutes more and she'd have drowned.

He clung to the piling with one hand, fished for a knife with the other and finally got her free. She went limp as he towed her ashore. Jacquin and four radio cops were waiting to haul them to safety. Evans shook water out of his ears and turned toward Jacquin.

"We still have to find Monohan. He's just as important to me as this girl is to her husband."

Jacquin was gazing out over the river. A harbor patrol boat slipped by, its powerful searchlight flashing across the bows of several anchored craft.

"That freighter." Jacquin pointed to a ghostly-looking hulk in midstream. "I saw the name on her bow. It's the *Flamingo.* That's Slip Bagley's boat. I heard about it when I was in prison. He's bound to be aboard and he couldn't have seen us rescue the girl."

Evans turned to the radio cops. "Get the marine police on the wire. Have them board that freighter and tell them to look out for trouble."

The radio cops hurried away. Two of them rushed June Gale to a hospital, while the other pair went in

FLIGHT CALCULATOR

~~$2.00~~

FREE!

● This Flight Calculator is an inexpensive copy of an expensive instrument. Made up of celluloid, it sells in the better shops, for $2.00 and upward.

We had a copy made on inexpensive but sturdy stock and are offering it absolutely free with each copy of AIR PROGRESS. Every aviation fan should have his copy for it contains hundreds of photographs, many pages in full color, especially mounted for framing; air personalities; the language of flying; detailed drawings and many other new and unique features.

AIR PROGRESS
Dept. N-C
79 Seventh Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Here is my quarter. Kindly mail me AIR PROGRESS and one Flight Calculator.

NAME..........

ADDRESS..........

CITY.......... **STATE**..........

search of a phone. Evans began pacing the pier nervously. Jacquin fell into step with him. Neither man spoke. Minutes crawled by and then out of the harbor darkness darted three fast police launches. Their searchlights flooded the *Flamingo* with brilliant light.

The freighter was desperately trying to weigh anchor and get away. A gun, mounted on one of the police boats, cut loose and a shell struck the freighter near the bow. Machine guns chattered a grim warning. Then men appeared on deck. One was Monohan, waving his arms excitedly. The others just held their arms high and didn't show much enthusiasm. Evans picked out the bulky form of Slip Bagley.

"That," he said slowly, "is that. We'll go back, Jacquin. There's a lot to explain. You got any ideas? The way Bill Dorsey's dead arm moved can be accounted for. Muscular reaction after death, maybe. But what made you speak the number of this pier? What made the crystal glow? How is it possible that those figures appeared in it?"

Jacquin shrugged. "Who can explain that? I have studied the subject, Evans. I studied it in prison, and after I was released. Mental telepathy, perhaps, coming from Monohan, or even the girl. My eyes wanted to see those things in the crystal. They did! Perhaps no one else could have seen them. Then I . . . I just felt unaccountably sleepy. I suppose I did sleep. If I spoke, I'm not aware of it."

Evans nodded slowly. "There must be an explanation, of course. I have an idea about that, too. Your eyes did want to see what you told me was in the crystal. When the stick-up was planned, no one expected there would be murders—cop killings anyway. Slip Bagley always was too fast on the trigger. The original plan was to not only grab all the money but take the girl, tie her here and in that manner force the people at the wedding to make no complaint to the police until Slip and his mob were sailing quietly away. Then you were supposed to read your little crystal. The girl would be saved, and you'd be the hottest news outside of the war dispatches. Slip forgot one thing—that a freighter in the channel sails with the tide and by the time it was out of the river the girl would be dead. You're afraid of the chair, Frenchy. You thought that, since I recognized you, I might suspect—just as I did—that you had a hand in it."

"I couldn't help it." Frenchy grabbed the detective's arm. "Slip made me do it. I thought the girl would be safe. I didn't think anyone would be killed. Honest—that's the truth. Look, Evans, you promised me a twenty-four-hour start if I told where the girl was. I did, and you've got to keep your word."

Evans nodded. "I'll keep it, if that's what you want, but take my advice, Frenchy. Get it over with now. Your confession may save your skin. It will most certainly send Bagley and his mob along the route to the chair. And you're good, Frenchy. There's no denying that. Everybody at the wedding believes you actually saw all that stuff in the crystal. They believe Bill Dorsey's voice spoke through your lips. Not me though. A cop has to be a professional doubter—especially when I knew you and Slip were cellmates at the Big House and that you used to be a next-to-closing act in vaudeville days—in which you imitated the voices of well-known people. Let's go."

THE END.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

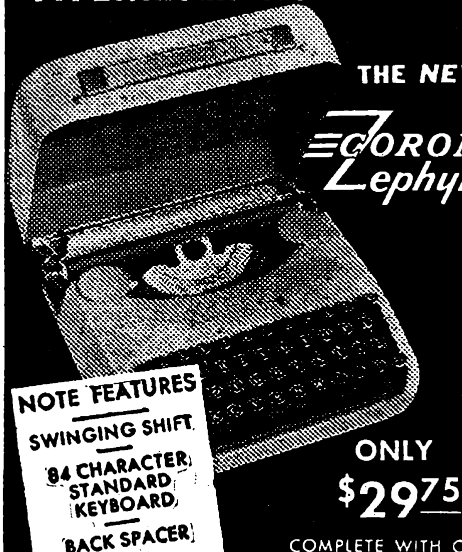
Continued from page 6

the beautiful girl who has built up the most famous detective organization in New York, only no one knows it. They all think that the boss of the Cash and Carry Agency is Alec, the good-looking, well-built "front" who is Carrie's assistant. Because clients don't think much of girl detectives, Carrie makes believe she is the secretary, and Alec is the boss, when they accept cases. But once they're on the trail, there is no doubt as to who is who. As a matter of fact, there's always enough action to go around, with plenty to spare. That's the case in "Red Face," which you will see in the next issue.

People often begin discussions on mysterious occurrences and supernatural events that lead them into complicated positions. Invariably, no one is the victor in the argument, probably because there is no definite proof one way or the other whether supernatural things are supernatural, or just seem to be.

For example, ghosts or ghostly occurrences. We have read many books, and have seen hundreds of clippings which tell of such occurrences, especially those which tend to show that these events have "foretold" something. However, in almost every case, these prophetic occurrences are not revealed until that which they were supposed to prophesy has occurred. Then, you can look back over all the newspaper files and reports, and fail to find any such statement reported at the supposed time of its being given to the public.

Or, you will notice, too, that reports of such unusual events always come from some place other than the



THE LITTLE WONDER OF THE TYPEWRITER WORLD . . .

THE NEW CORONA Zephyr

NOTE FEATURES
SWINGING SHIFT
84 CHARACTER STANDARD KEYBOARD
BACK SPACER
WEIGHS ONLY 9 lbs.
FITS INTO DESK DRAWER

ONLY $29.75
COMPLETE WITH CASE

MAIL THIS COUPON FOR DETAILS
L C SMITH & CORONA TYPEWRITERS INC Desk 8,
707 E Washington St., Syracuse, N. Y.
Please send me free folder describing Corona Zephyr.

Name..
Address..
City.............................. *State*..........

LAW STUDY AT HOME

Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Big corporations are headed by men with legal training.

More Ability: More Prestige: More Money

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL. B. Successful graduates in every section of the U. S. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.

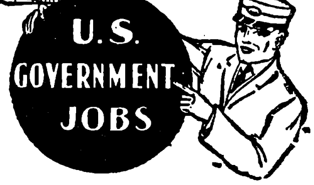
LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 865-L, Chicago
A Correspondence Institution

RAILWAY POSTAL CLERK
GOVERNMENT CLERK
MAIL CARRIER
POSTOFFICE CLERK

START $1260 TO $2100 YEAR

MEN—WOMEN. Write immediately for free 32-page Civil Service book, with list of positions and full particulars telling how to qualify for appointment.

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. G194, Rochester, N. Y.



DIGESTIVE JUICES FAILING?

Then Food CAN'T Digest Right, Your Strength Goes—You Feel Rotten, You Look Older . . . Start those Digestive Juices Flowing Normally Again

If there is nothing organically wrong with you, a common cause of poor digestion is a WEAK flow of DIGESTIVE JUICES. Then food can't digest right. You feel SOUR, often have HEARTBURN, gas, a DIZZY head.

You must do something to start digestive juices flowing NORMALLY again. Set the millions of tiny cells in Fleischmann's Yeast to work on those digestive glands. This yeast is a STIMULATOR. It starts the juices forming faster. Then digestion should pick up—in test cases it was *greatly increased*. When digestion improves, strength should begin to come back so that you feel like a NEW person. Get Fleischmann's Yeast today. Eat one cake first thing in the morning, another ½ hour before supper.

FREE—Write for "You Can't Feel Well If Digestive Juices Are Failing," to F. Y. Co., Dept. H-S, 691 Washington St., New York. Absolutely FREE!

Copyright, 1940, Standard Brands Incorporated

Classified Advertising

Patents Secured

INVENTORS—Don't delay. Protect your idea with a Patent. Get Free Patent Guide. Write Clarence A. O'Brien, Registered Patent Attorney, OJ51 Adams Building, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—Reasonable terms. Book and advice free. L. F. Randolph, Dept. 513, Washington, D. C.

INVENTORS:—WE SUCCESSFULLY SELL inventions, patented and unpatented. Write us, if you have a practical useful idea for sale. Chartered Institute of American Inventors, Dept. 42, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS SECURED. Two valuable booklets sent free. Write immediately: Victor J. Evans & Co., 563-K Victor Building, Washington, D. C.

Detectives—Instructions

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. WORK HOME. TRAVEL. DETECTIVE particulars free. Experience unnecessary. Write GEORGE WAGONER, 2640-A Broadway, New York.

DETECTIVES—SECRET INVESTIGATIONS—TRAINING. Home—Travel—Fingerprints—Particulars Free. Chief Mullica, 577-S Orpheum Building, Jersey City.

Old Gold & Money Wanted

GOLD—$35 OUNCE. Ship old gold teeth, crowns, jewelry, watches—receive cash by return mail. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Free information. Paramount Gold Refining Co., 1500-G Hennepin, Minneapolis, Minn.

Photo Finishing—Developing

ROLLS DEVELOPED—25c coin. Two 5x7 Double Weight Professional Enlargements, 8 gloss prints. Club Photo Service, Dept. 17, La Crosse, Wis.

8 ENLARGEMENTS—films developed plus 8 enlargements, 25c coin—116 or smaller. Enlarge Photo, Box 791, Dept. SS, Boston, Mass.

AT LAST! ALL YOUR SNAPSHOTS IN NATURAL COLORS. Roll developed, 8 Natural Color Prints, only 25c. Reprints, 3c. Amazingly beautiful. Natural Color Photo, Janesville, Wisconsin.

SNAPSHOTS, ROLL FINISHED 25c (16 prints or eight enlargements) Speedy Service, Box 64-S, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

ROLL DEVELOPED, 16 Velox prints 25c. Dividend Coupon, 16 reprints 25c. Willard Studios, Box 3535E, Cleveland, Ohio.

Correspondence Courses

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES and educational books, slightly used. Sold. Rented. Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and bargain catalog Free. Nelson Company, 500 Sherman, Dept. J-215, Chicago.

Help Wanted—Instructions

M. M. EARNED $1174 in spare time for exceptional "cellar crop" Snow-King mushrooms! Free Book tells if your cellar, shed suitable. We buy crops. United, 3848 Lincoln Ave., Dept. 531, Chicago.

BECOME AN EXPERT

ACCOUNTANT

Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn $2,000 to $10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. About 20,000 Certified Public Accountants in the U. S. We train you thoroly at home in spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Personal training under supervision of staff of C. P. A.'s, including members of the American Institute of Accountants. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays."

LaSalle Extension University, Dept.865-H, Chicago

A Correspondence Institution

Sawtooth Harry Says:
TWENTY GRAND
RAZOR BLADES
are Habit Forming
5
Leather Stropped
BLADES FOR
10¢
MADE IN U.S.A.
TWENTY GRAND
FINEST SWE

Brother . . . don't you Never try a Twenty Grand Razor Blade! They're HABIT FORMING. Once yuh feel the perfect leather-stropped edge again yer face, yer **doomed**. Yuh won't be able to get along without 'em. Keep away from them self-help displays in Drug and other stores in your neighborhood.

WORLD'S PRODUCTS CO., Spencer, Ind.

source. We were especially amused at one collection of such items. Every report in that collection bore a dateline other than the original town or city in which the event was supposed to have occurred.

If some ghostly manifestation occurred in Pittsburgh, the Cleveland papers, and maybe Buffalo papers, would have a report on it, but nothing appeared in the Cleveland papers. If the thing occurred, say, in New York, the Philadelphia and Boston papers would explain it, but not a thing appeared in the many New York City papers.

It seems to us, therefore, that most of these things are merely the result of imagination. If a rumor, or report, comes to a paper far from the scene, they have to take the report for what it is worth. The local papers, however, see in it a real story, so they probably send a reporter to the scene to get the real facts—and the reporter comes back with no story at all, for there probably is none.

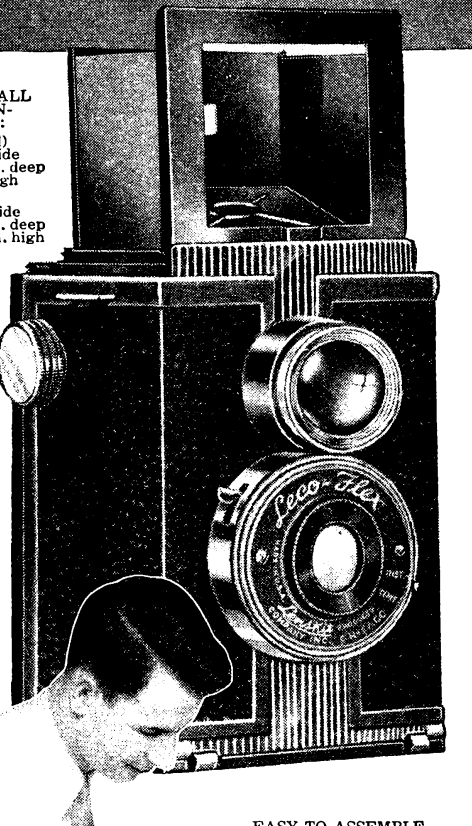
Maybe we're wrong in that, but then again maybe we're not. We've made a few trips to "haunted houses" with Joseph Dunninger, famous for his standing offer of ten thousand dollars to anyone who can show him a supernatural manifestation that he cannot duplicate mechanically. We've seen many of these "haunted" homes, proof of whose "haunting" came from neighbors and other people, but where nothing happened when the test was on. And nothing happened there afterward, either!

However, stories of the supernatural are interesting, no matter which way you look at them, and we know our readers like them from time to time. If you don't, and have any opinions to express on the subject, why not tell us? Our other readers would probably be interested, and be glad to get back at your statements, no doubt.

ASSEMBLE THIS FINE LensKit REFLEX CAMERA
TRADE MARK
AT HOME...YOURSELF...FOR ONLY

$3.95 POSTPAID

OVERALL DIMENSIONS:
(closed)
3 in. wide
2 1-4 in. deep
4 in. high
(open)
3 in. wide
2 1-4 in. deep
6 3-4 in. high



It's Easy!
It's Thrilling!
It's Instructive!
It's Fascinating!

Putting a Precision Camera Like This Together is More Fun Than Any Hobby You've Ever Enjoyed

IF YOU are the kind of fellow who gets a big "kick" out of making useful, clever things with your own hands all by yourself . . . if you think taking pictures is fun . . . just imagine the pleasure of taking pictures with a camera BUILT WITH YOUR OWN HANDS!

Words can't describe the thrill of seeing this fine, modern double-lens reflex "grow" under your very eyes as you assemble the precision LensKit parts one by one. And the fun of assembling is just the BEGINNING. The 12 sharp, clear, 2¼"x2¼" pictures the LensKit takes on each roll of Eastman 620 or Agfa PB20 film will delight you for years to come. Your friends won't believe they were taken with a camera you built yourself.

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

No complicated tools are required. To enjoy this fascinating hobby all you need is: simple tools, patience, and the ability to follow the simple step-by-step instructions included with each LensKit. Your kitchen table can be your workbench.

NOT A TOY—BUT A REAL PRACTICAL CAMERA

Ask any expert . . . he'll tell you the twin-lens reflex is the coming trend. It's simpler to operate . . . the full-picture-size upright image on the ground glass view finder shows exactly how the picture looks when you take it. Even a small child can snap pictures with a LensKit camera.

Here Are Some of the Features of the LensKit Reflex (the kind you usually look for on much more expensive cameras):

● One-Piece Die-Cast Metal Housing ● Simple, Positive-Acting Rotary Shutter ● Multi-Dimensional Fixed-Focus 75-mm Meniscus Lens ● Two Viewfinders: "Eye-level" for fast-moving objects; also separate, upright-image, brilliant ground-glass finder for critical portrait or snapshot photos. YOU SEE WHAT YOU GET BEFORE SNAPPING THE PICTURE. ● Tripod Socket with Standard Thread ● Separate Brilliant Viewfinder Lens ● Leather Carrying Strap ● Two-Way Exposure: Snap or Time.

THE "BUILD-IT-YOURSELF" LENSKIT

includes everything you need . . . all precision-made parts, including completely assembled shutter unit; simple detailed drawings and comprehensive easy-to-understand assembling and operating instructions; all for only $3.95, postpaid.

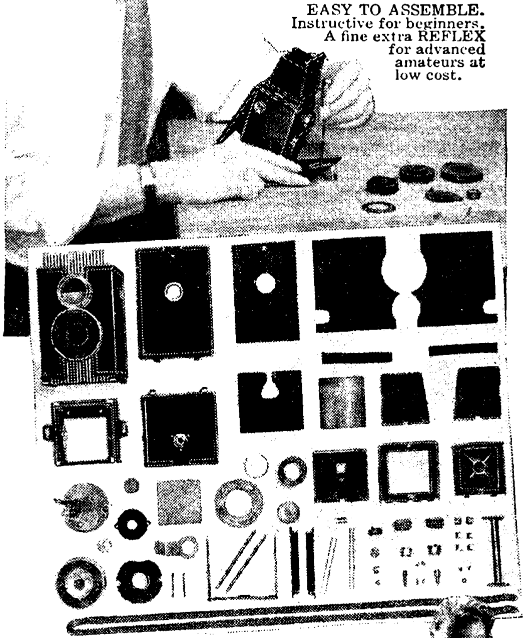
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED!

Send for your LensKit today! Enjoy the fun, the fascination, the thrill of building this useful, modern precision-made reflex. Think of the pleasure you'll get out of taking sharp, clear, perfectly-framed negatives that can be printed 2¼" x 2¼" by contact, or enlarged 20 diameters or more.

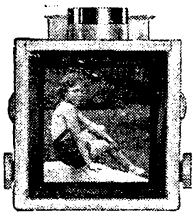
The complete LensKit is only $3.95, postpaid, when remittance in full accompanies your order. If you prefer, you may send only $1.00 and we will ship your LensKit C.O.D. for balance, plus mailing charges. You save the mailing charges when you send cash in full. All parts in the LensKit are guaranteed against defects in material or workmanship for one year.

LensKit
TRADE MARK

LENSKIT PRODUCTS COMPANY, Inc., 435 N. Michigan Ave., Dept. 50, Chicago



EASY TO ASSEMBLE. Instructive for beginners. A fine extra REFLEX for advanced amateurs at low cost.



LENSKIT includes everything from neckstrap to screws. You see what you snap when you look down into viewfinder.

Copyright 1940 LensKit Products Co., Inc.

FILL OUT AND MAIL THE CONVENIENT COUPON BELOW!

LENSKIT PRODUCTS COMPANY, Inc.
435 North Michigan Avenue, Dept. 50, Chicago, Illinois

Gentlemen: ☐ I enclose $1.00 for the complete LensKit. Send C. O. D. for balance, plus a few cents mailing charges.

☐ I enclose remittance in the amount of $3.95. Please send me postpaid immediately the complete LensKit.

NAME______________________________

ADDRESS___________________________

161
TENNESSEE
EXCHANGE
LUCKY STRIKE
LUCKY STRIKE
"IT'S TOASTED"
CIGARETTES
LUCKY STRIKE

Actual color photograph—A lot of fine, golden tobacco for Luckies.

LUCKIES' FINER TOBACCOS MEAN LESS NICOTINE

Authoritative tests reveal that Luckies' finer tobaccos contain less nicotine than any other leading brand!

Here's the natural result of buying finer, selected cigarette tobacco for Lucky Strike. The average nicotine content of Luckies, for over two years, has been 12% less than the average of the four other leading brands★—less than any one of them. This fact is proven by authoritative tests which have been confirmed from time to time by independent laboratories.

You see, each year we exhaustively analyze tobaccos before purchase. Thus our buyers can select the leaf that is ripe and mellow, yet mild and low in nicotine content—then buy it up.

The result—a cigarette of finer tobaccos—mild and mellow, with a naturally lower nicotine content. Have you tried a Lucky lately?

★**NICOTINE CONTENT OF LEADING BRANDS.** From January 1938 through March 1940, Lucky Strike has had an average nicotine content of 2.02 parts per hundred—averaging 9.82% less nicotine content than Brand A; 21.09% less than Brand B; 15.48% less than Brand C; 3.81% less than Brand D.

Copyright 1940, The American Tobacco Company

With men who know tobacco best–it's *LUCKIES 2 TO 1*

10¢ NOV·1940

MYSTERY

A STREET

PUBLIC